

A PELICAN BOOK

LEWIS WAY

Alfred Adler

AN INTRODUCTION TO HIS PSYCHOLOGY

The methods of the great
educationist and psychologist
explained and illustrated
often in his own vivid words



A VOLUME OF THE
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ADLER was accepted in Europe and America as the greatest educational authority since Froebel and Pestalozzi. His work for the Vienna schools up to the time of the Nazis drew educationists from all over the world.

This book of Lewis Way is written by a scholar already well known for his comparative study of Freud, Jung, and Adler, and is written for all those who take an interest in psychology and child welfare; particularly for teachers, probation officers, and doctors – and is undeniably of value for all parents.

Adler often used to say 'I am after all the legitimate father of the Inferiority Complex'. Nine out of ten people know psychology simply by this phrase, but they do not know the scientific philosophy which Adler founded upon it.

Here, in this book, Adler's philosophy is simply and plainly told, so that every teacher can practise it, every probation officer and doctor study his child problem by the light Adler's psychology threw upon it.

Lewis Way, in addition to his merits as a distinguished writer, had the advantage of a personal friendship with Adler, but he remains a detached, factual, and open-minded thinker. The book provides a biographical chapter which brings the remarkable personality of Adler vividly to life. It contains much material hitherto not published in this country and many practical illustrations of how Adler actually handled children and patients.

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Editorial Foreword

MODERN theories concerning the 'deeper' sources of human motivation – theories concerning the unconscious mind – derive in the main from the work of three men: Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, and Alfred Adler. By general consent the originating genius was Freud, and psycho-analytic theory as developed by him and his more faithful disciples has a presumptive claim to be the orthodoxy in contrast with which the theories of Jung and Adler appear to be not only derivative but 'deviationist' as well. Nevertheless, the doctrines of Jung and Adler are each of distinctive interest and importance, and each may well contribute in a significant way to the final and integrated theory which may one day emerge. Both Freud and Jung are remarkable for the number and the variety of their special theories, and for the vastness of the fields to which these theories have been applied. In contrast, the interest in Adlerian theories lies rather in his development of a smaller number of original conceptions, and in their more immediate and more obvious applications. Teachers and social workers have often said that the principles of Adler's psychology can be more readily turned to practical account in their work than can the principles of Freud or the principles of Jung.

Adler is best known for his discovery and description of 'the inferiority complex', and for his analysis of compensatory processes. It is, however, often supposed that this 'inferiority complex' is essentially neurotic or a symptom of maladjustment. The truth is rather that the experience of inferiority, and the need to compensate for it, is something universal – a fact of common human nature. This, indeed, is almost axiomatic. No one is perfect in every respect, and everyone is aware of some other weakness or limitation, and everyone has to deal in some way or other with his limitations. Broadly, there are two ways in which the pro-

blem can be met. The first is to avoid, or to endeavour to avoid, any situation in which inferiorities may be exposed. The other is to compensate for inferiority by the effort to excel in the respect in which inferiority is experienced. The latter, so far from being neurotic, is the more healthy and the more heroic response. The systematic and ingenious development of the theory of inferiority and of compensation provides a major thesis of the Adlerian system.

In this volume Lewis Way gives an unusually lucid exposition of this system, introducing it with a fresh and enlightening study of *Adler the Man*. Readers of other volumes in this series designed on the same plan have sometimes preferred to study the ideas of the man before interesting themselves in the study of his life. Editorial forewords may be skipped altogether, and introductory biographical chapters left to the end. In the present case readers are advised to take the chapters in the order in which Lewis Way has arranged them. 'Individual Psychology', as the Adlerian system is described, is essentially an expression of the individuality of its creator. In Adler's own life story we can see Adler's own compensations and the emergence of Adler's own 'style of life'. Any psychologist who is a psychologist at all should be able to turn his own experiences to good account. Adler has drawn upon and interpreted his own experiences in creating a practical psychology which contains much that, so interpreted, must be to the advantage of all.

C. A. MACE

Preface

INDIVIDUAL Psychology cannot be wholly summed up in terms of its theoretical propositions. One may come to understand it as a scientific theory yet still have missed the essential point that it is also a living attitude of mind. This has been the difficulty of many people who have approached it in a purely intellectual manner.

Adler was an integral part of his science. To appreciate the science fully it is necessary to appreciate the characteristically direct and vigorous style of thinking and acting of the mind that created it. Therefore I have not hesitated to devote a good deal of attention to Adler's own personality and I have quoted him wherever possible in his own words.

I have taken the liberty of making some use of my own previous writings on the subject, as the present book is directed to a different public from that which I formerly had in mind.

My thanks are due to the publishers of Adler's works in England for their permission to quote. A list of these works and their publishers is given at the end of the book.

I have also made some use of Adler's unpublished writings, as collected by Nigel Dennis. Thanks are due to Prof. Oscar Spiel for permission to quote from his MS. previous to its publication in this country, to Phyllis Bottome for access to her notes on Adler's life, and to Ernan Forbes Dennis for procuring me much relevant material.

LEWIS WAY

CHAPTER I : Adler the Man

1. Early Memories

Alfred Adler was born in 1870 in an outlying suburb of Vienna called Penzing. His father, Leopold Adler, was a corn-merchant whose business prospered well during the time when the children were growing up but who later suffered financial reverses. Both parents came from the Burgenland, the arable country to the south-east of Vienna, and were of Hungarian Jewish extraction.

The family moved house several times during Alfred's childhood, but kept always to the northern or western suburbs of Vienna, where the father could maintain his business contacts with the country. Their longest stay – from the time when Alfred was twelve until he entered the University – was on the Währingerstrasse, now a part of the city, but at that time bordered by fields. Here they had their own farm. Above them, the road mounted through vineyards to the village of Grinzing where, from time immemorial, the Viennese have congregated on summer evenings to drink the new wine. Higher still than Grinzing lie the pine-forests of the Wienerwald.

Both the situation of his home and the nature of his father's calling put Alfred as much in touch with country life as with the life of the town. He was a particularly active, outdoor boy. Swimming, roving in the pine woods, climbing in the mountains were his favourite pastimes and suited well his stocky, vigorous frame. For, in spite of a sickly childhood, he possessed physically as well as mentally a very virile power and never in adult life suffered from serious illness. With this strength was associated a love of

beauty and a protective tenderness towards all weaker things. His passion for flowers was well known and animals seemed instinctively to trust him. 'One could always tell when Alfred was home from school,' a member of the family recalled of the Währingerstrasse days, 'because all the pigeons would fly off in a flock from the loft to greet him.'¹

At the same time, the pleasure he took in the town, in people and in their doings, was as great as or even greater than his pleasure in Nature. 'I love noise,' he used to say. 'There is no music I prefer to the traffic of a great street full of human beings moving about their daily business.'² It was one of the fortunes of his home situation that he escaped the isolating effects of segregation with members of his own race which was the usual lot of city Jews at that time. His playmates of the neighbourhood were all Christian and he grew up to be first and foremost a Viennese. His accent was pure Viennese and in later life he would often address in their native dialect the children brought to his clinics for treatment. His manners had that easy-going tolerance and his wit that gently ironic turn, with sometimes a hint of melancholy behind the laughter, which are characteristic of Vienna. He revelled in the gossip of the town which, he would often declare, was as vivid to him as were the events of his personal life. He shared with his whole family the Viennese love of music, both the music of the Opera and the popular Schrammel music sung to the zither beneath the vines of the Grinzing cafés. Throughout his life he never lost the café habit, which suited so exactly his open and easy temperament.

The Adler family consisted of four boys and two girls. Alfred was the second son. 'My eldest brother was the only one with whom I did not get along well,' he later told his biographer, 'and he never took any part in our games. At

1. Phyllis Bottome: *Alfred Adler, Apostle of Freedom*, 2nd ed. (Faber and Faber, London), p. 26.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 27.

an early age, I became part of a wide social milieu and in our games both girls and boys learned to look upon one another as communal equals.¹ After Alfred's death, his eldest brother confirmed this statement from his own angle. 'When he was quite a little boy Alfred was already terribly popular with everybody. It was always the same thing; everybody seemed to like him. But I never understood why, for I always found him quarrelsome and ambitious. *We* never got on together.'²

Throughout his career, there were to be those few who judged Adler as his eldest brother judged him and who were unable to understand the many who found his qualities to be the exact opposite. There is no doubt that Adler had a strongly combative nature, and it is possible that if ever he felt challenged in a way which recalled the challenge of this elder brother an old reaction would be awakened and he would show the traits of which some people complained. As a rebellious younger child he was always stimulated, for good or for bad, by a challenge. Once at a public meeting, he gave a particularly fine lecture after his chairman had spoken rather slightly of his psychology. 'He made me angry,' he explained afterwards. 'You should always arrange to have a chairman who insults me before I begin.'³

But, for the same reason that he was a younger child, Adler had what amounted almost to a hatred of any kind of authoritarianism, whether displayed by himself or by others. His insistence was always upon the group in which 'boys and girls should learn to look upon one another as equals.' For his playmates of the suburbs, as, later, for his friends and colleagues, Adler's popularity rested upon his geniality and his modesty. So far from appearing quarrelsome and ambitious, he disliked to assume a foremost role among his friends. He was at his happiest when he felt that the group of which he was a member was pervaded by a

1. Bottome, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

3. *Op. cit.*, p. 228.

spirit of easy harmony. Often he would sit for long periods silent in such a group, quietly enjoying its atmosphere and his own sense of partnership with it. When he did spring to life, it was not as the dictator who lays down the law but as the instigator of a rebel band, the one who suggests the mischief.

If Adler's general popularity was galling to his eldest brother, so must have been the fact that he was his father's favourite. The father had a sense of humour, a sceptical turn of mind, and a vigorous love of life, qualities to which his second son responded naturally. He must have been a colourful personality, idiosyncratic in all his ideas and habits. Described as a handsome man who invariably appeared as if dressed for a party, he had a great dislike of any talk of illness and even chose to regard it as an insult if anyone asked after his health. His daily regime was to rise at five in the morning, when he would call Alfred out of bed for a walk before breakfast, and he retired punctually at seven in the evening. To his idiosyncratic habits was coupled an equally idiosyncratic will, which he enforced to the point of refusing to move to one side if he encountered anyone upon a staircase. But in spite of this symbolic insistence upon having his own way, he was no authoritarian. He allowed his children a degree of personal freedom rare in those days and avoided either punishments or caresses. Perhaps, with his mixture of assertiveness and love of liberty, he too had been a younger son.

There is a story¹ that as a child Alfred was greedy and always snatched the largest helping, a failing which his father corrected by setting before him the whole dish of dumplings and remarking quietly: 'We will eat what you leave.' This correction is in the spirit of Adler's own technique of handling children and it was probably from the father's example that he profited most as a child. Of the mother, on the other hand, he confessed himself to have been critical. She is said to have been quiet and reserved, over-

1. Phyllis Bottome (Unpublished Notes).

shadowed by the witty and rather flamboyant personality of her husband. She had the tendencies of the too conscientious, self-sacrificing type of woman, who works from morning to night at the affairs of the house, into which, for all her devotion, she is unable to bring a feeling of joy and sunshine. After the collapse of her husband's affairs, she slaved so hard to keep the business going that she is said to have died early in consequence.

Adler attributed his critical attitude towards her to the diversion of her attention when other children were born. 'Before my younger brother was born,' he records, 'there can be no doubt that I was reared and watched with the greatest solicitude on account of my sickness. I am sure that I must have had to put up with a great deal less of this attention when my younger brother was born. I have a vague idea that I took this apparent loss of attention on the part of my mother very much to heart. But it did not affect me in regard to my father who was out all day working and to whom I became deeply attached. As I found out later, I wronged my mother in feeling that she deprived me of her affection. Throughout her life she loved all her children with the same degree of warmth and affection.'¹

This tribute to his mother, given in his old age, was evidently no mere matter of pious words, for we have testimony that he abandoned very early in life his childhood antagonism to her. At the busiest period of his youth, just after leaving the University, 'his friends were astonished at the preferred position accorded to his mother. She was not allowed to go out alone. When there was no one at home, some member of the family was notified that his mother wanted to go out and needed a companion. Some friends once asked Adler why he would interrupt his work just to accompany his mother. He answered gravely, "But I cannot let my mother go out alone. She is not used to that"'²

1. Bottome, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

2. Herther Orgler: *Alfred Adler, The Man and His Work* (Daniel, London), p. 24.

Adler always displayed this protective care and courtesy towards women; it was an attribute of his virility. But it may have been in part due to his early disappointment over the mother and to his companionship with the father that he became very much what is known as a 'man's man'. Loving women though he did, he had not the habit, often to be noticed in men who have been too reliant upon their mothers, of running to women to be comforted and to pour out confidences. Temperamentally, also, however expansive and open he appeared to be upon the surface, Adler was extremely reticent with everyone upon personal affairs. He had that shyness, that 'pudeur' at looking too deeply into his inner life which is sometimes to be noticed in extraverts. For all these reasons he seemed to be at his happiest with his café companions and colleagues. His love of humanity was broad and all-inclusive, extensive rather than intensive, just as his intellectual ideas possessed the quality of a bold amplitude rather than of a concentrated depth.

'One of my earliest recollections,' said Adler, 'is of sitting on a bench, bandaged up on account of rickets, with my healthy elder brother sitting opposite me. He could run, jump and move about quite effortlessly, while for me movement of any sort was a strain and an effort. Everyone went to great pains to help me, and my mother and father did all that was in their power to do. At the time of this recollection I must have been about two years old.'¹ In this recollection, we can see how his active, gregarious nature is built up by measuring his powers against the brother who is sitting, significantly, 'opposite' him. His line of striving would take him outside the home inhabited by mothers and, in later life, by wives. It would lie in the direction of cultivating that circle of popularity from which, as we saw from an earlier memory, the brother was excluded, and in that kind of activity which his rachitic weakness had taught him to value.

'I did not enjoy staying at home,' he confirms. 'Perhaps

1. Bottome, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

because my attitude to my mother was at fault, but also without doubt because I did my best to excel at running, jumping and rushing around, activities of which my elder brother was making me constantly aware. I was always eager to get out of doors and was helped in doing so by the fact that almost next door to our house was an open, practically disused plot and a big field. There were almost no vehicles about, and when there were they moved so slowly that there was scarcely any chance of our being run over or being involved in any accident. But despite this, I was run over twice when I was four or five years old, but without being hurt at all seriously. The field near our house was the meeting place of all the local children. Most of the people in our district were quiet, humble and usually poor people who frequently asked me to their homes. Because of my friendliness and liveliness I was well received wherever I went.¹

The belief that 'life is movement' is the natural conclusion of the rachitic child. 'We can see quite clearly in the experiences of my childhood,' said Adler, 'how they established a certain characteristic tendency – more or less representative of my position in the family and of my desire to *move* freely – to see all *psychic manifestations in terms of movement*.'² The emphasis upon movement is not only present in the 'striving from a minus to a plus situation' which is one of the main tenets of his psychology. It is present also in his view of the life-style as something which is ever growing and changing. It is present even in his scepticism, for a sceptical attitude is one that sees all things as involved in the flood of Becoming and therefore immeasurable by means of fixed beliefs or absolutes. Adler's very recreations – music, which is the most fluid as well as the most social of the arts, mountain-climbing and swimming – emphasize his pre-occupation with the problem of movement. Swimming, especially, seemed to correspond to his idea of life and was

1. Bottome, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 22.

the comparison which he constantly used in his work with patients. 'What do you do when you learn to swim?' he would ask a patient. 'You make mistakes, do you not? And when you have made all the mistakes you possibly can short of drowning, then you find that you can swim. Do not be afraid of making mistakes, for there is no other way of learning either how to swim or how to live.'

It was this delight in life for its own sake, as some sort of marvellous exercise in a medium where one should revel fearlessly, which inspired patients restricted by their fears and preoccupied by 'safeguarding devices'. What Adler always wanted of his patients was to see them 'join the others'. His approach to them had something of the air of the kindly comrade who steps out of the circle of playmates to persuade back one who is moping in a corner. In any human situation it instantly troubled him if he found that anyone had been left out. Often, together with his sense of comradeship with a patient, there would be a rebellious twinkle in his eye which would make it seem as if he and the patient were in a conspiratorial league to outwit the pompous authorities of the world. 'Let us show them what we can do,' he would often say, and the patient would see him, not as a solemn father-confessor, but as a brother with whom it would be good to enter into the game. This attitude of a brother, where other psychologists are wont to take the attitude of a father, was one of the secrets of his therapeutic success. It meant that he did not meet with those prolonged states of 'resistance' and 'transference' which the father-type of psychologist describes.

As one might suppose, a boy who preferred to learn his wisdom in the streets was not destined to be an outstanding scholar. Alfred started school at the age of five, but 'I always had tunes running in my head. When I began to read as a student they stopped, but while I was a young boy tunes came to me instead of thoughts.'¹ At his secondary school he did so badly, especially at mathematics, that the

1. Bottome, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

teacher advised that he should leave and become apprenticed to a cobbler, since he would obviously be fit for nothing better. 'If my father had followed this advice and had let me become a cobbler,' Adler later commented, 'then I would probably have done a good job at that, but I would have believed all my life that there is such a thing as having no gift for mathematics.'¹ 'Fortunately, I found myself one day, to my own great astonishment, able to complete a problem which had stumped my schoolmaster. The success changed my whole attitude to mathematics. Where previously I had withdrawn my interest from the whole subject, now I began to enjoy it and to use every opportunity for increasing my ability. In consequence, I became one of the best mathematicians in my school. The experience helped me, I think, to see the fallacy of theories of special talents and inborn capacities.'²

'If one studies the lives of outstanding men,' Adler would often say, 'one sees how early they began their training and how they never deviated from their aim.' His own poor record at school might seem to contradict this statement, but it should be remembered that the manner in which a child is preparing itself for life cannot be fully understood until its final aim has matured. For Adler, the activity of the street was at that time perhaps of more value than book-learning in helping him to understand human nature. What is certain is that he came very early to his decision to be a doctor and that he experienced none of those changes of mind through which the ordinary child attains to a final choice of profession. His own sickly and rachitic childhood, coupled with certain experiences of the fact of death, were the factors which contributed most to his decision. When quite small, he suffered from a spasm of the glottis, which brought vividly before him the frightening experience of suffocation. At the age of three, he woke to find that a younger brother had died in the adjoining bed. Two years

1. Orgler, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

2. Adler: *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 170.

later – the deciding experience – he became aware that he was in danger of a similar fate. 'My early realization of the fact of death – a fact which I grasped sensibly and wholesomely, not morbidly, not regarding death as an insurmountable menace for a child – was increased when I had pneumonia at the age of five, and the doctor who had suddenly been called in told my father that there was no point in going to the trouble of looking after me as there was no hope of my living. At once a frightful terror came over me and a few days later when I was well I decided definitely to become a doctor so that I should have a better defence against the danger of death and weapons to combat it superior to my doctor's.'¹

It was shortly after this illness that Adler went to his first school. 'I remember,' he says, 'that the path to the school led through a cemetery. I was frightened every time and was exceedingly disconcerted on seeing the other children pass the cemetery without paying the least attention to it, while every step I took was accompanied by a feeling of fear and horror. Apart from the extreme discomfort occasioned by this fear, I was also annoyed at the idea of being less brave than the others. One day I made up my mind to put an end to this fear of death. I decided on a method to harden myself. I lingered behind the others, placed my school bag on the ground near the cemetery wall and ran across it a dozen times until I felt that I had mastered the fear. After that I believe that I passed along this path without any fear.'²

Later in life, Adler was to find out from former school friends that the cemetery which he had imagined in such detail had had no existence. The memory had been purely fictitious, 'a poetic dream to express my longing to overcome the fear of death.' If we were to apply his own methods of analysis to this 'dream', we should probably be struck once more by the interest which the child displayed

1. Bottome, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

2. Orgler, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

in movement. His imagined victory is to be able to run across the cemetery a dozen times. The immobility of death is contrasted with the activity of living. It is as if the child were telling himself 'I overcame my rachitic weakness and can move as well as other children; I can also be as brave as they and overcome my fear of death.' The presence of other persons in early memories, of the mother, the father, or the brothers and sisters, is, in Adler's view, always significant of the direction of the child's social interests. The appearance in this memory of a group of school comrades is precisely what we should expect from one of his gregarious character.

Another memory of this period shows the beginning of his curiosity about psychological motive. 'Shortly afterwards,' he recounts, 'the father of one of my playmates, a lamp-lighter, asked me what I was going to be in life. "A doctor," I said. He answered "Then you should be strung up to the nearest lamp-post." This remark made no adverse impression upon my choice of a profession. I merely thought, "There's another who has had a bad time at the hands of a doctor. But I shall be a *real* doctor." Soon after, it struck me that the man, a lamp-lighter, had his trade rather than me uppermost in his mind. After that, the determination to be a doctor never left me. I never could picture myself as taking up any other profession. Even the fascinating lure of art, despite the fact that I had considerable abilities in various forms of music, was not enough to turn me from my chosen path, and I persisted although many complex difficulties lay between me and my goal.'¹

In this memory there is a contrast between two types of reasoning. The lamp-lighter makes his bad experience of a doctor into a personal grievance and generalizes from this single experience to a grudge against the whole race of doctors. In the child's reasoning there appears no trace of bitterness against the doctor whose diagnosis had so badly frightened him, but only a determination to equip himself

1. Bottome, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

to better advantage. The lamp-lighter's reasoning exemplifies exactly what Adler was later to define as the 'neurotic logic', and the memory mirrors the contrast between the two methods of interpreting experience. The 'neurotic' method of converting a single instance into a false and hostile generalization is here opposed to the method of making a practical and friendly deduction from experience which is adopted by the person with 'social interest'. If this memory remained in the child's mind it is perhaps because it confirmed for him the rightness of his future philosophy.

His interest in psychological motive appears in another memory, tinged this time with the typical Viennese irony which he made his own. 'When I was three years old, my parents left us two boys for a few days in the care of a governess. When they came back I met them singing a street song, the words of which are in my mind to this day, as is the melody to which I sang it. (It is possible that I sang or heard this same song at some later period so that my remembrance of its significance might spring from that later date.) The song was about a woman who explained that she couldn't eat chicken because she was so hurt by the killing of her little hen. At this, the singer asks how she can have such a soft heart when she thinks nothing of throwing a flower pot at her husband's head. I realized that I must in the future judge mankind not by their spoken words and sentiments but by their actions. Once the song had put this into my head, the idea remained for ever and grew stronger and stronger.'¹

2. *Birth of Individual Psychology*

Although Adler outgrew the rachitic child's feeling of clumsiness, the compensations for this feeling remained with him, not only in his interest for every form of move-

1. Bottome, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

ment but in the agility of his mind. The broad mouth, with curiously curving lips, was humorous and talkative, and his liveliness, his ingenuity, his love of concrete particularities, his fund of anecdotes made him the perfect companion. Throughout his life, from his childhood days spent on the streets, he retained Socrates' liking both for learning and teaching his wisdom in the market place, and had little use for academic pretension. He remained by preference in the midst of life, in touch with the common lot of humanity, and had no desire to reach some pinnacle from which he could survey the world from above. The movement of his mind was lateral rather than vertical, inclined to gather all things to himself, to embrace all things rather than to soar. Even his physique accorded in some subtle way with this temperament. The bulky figure set upon short legs and the round head lying close between the shoulders conveyed an impression of circularity, seemed as if designed to bring him into touch with life at every point of his circumference. At the same time, one was conscious that his agility of mind was balanced by a certain weight, and that his geniality was backed by a formidable reserve of power. The brow was exceptionally massive and imaginative, and the eyes, his most arresting feature, large, heavy-lidded, were capable at times of losing their twinkle, of becoming almost entirely veiled by reflection or of shooting glances of a directness and penetration that could be startling. As a thinker his quality lay in a similar combination of empiricism and imagination. He remained close to the concrete particular, never theorizing for the sake of theorizing, yet displayed an unusual boldness and power in grasping relations as a whole.

From the time when he first entered the university and turned his attention seriously to study, Adler appears to have had no further set-backs. His life-long friend, Professor Furtmüller, wrote that 'Adler did distinguished work both in biology and in anatomy, and took an excellent degree. There was never any question as to the greatness of his abilities, both as a scientist from the biological point

of view and as a thinker from the philosophic point of view. He had material obstacles to overcome and he had to work hard in order to overcome them; but from his university career onward, Adler moved steadily forward and his success in any path he chose to follow was assured.¹

Adler passed out of the University in 1895 and began work at the Viennese Hospital and Polyclinic. In 1898, he set up in private practice in the Pratergasse, a neighbourhood of mostly Jewish and middle class people mixed with the waiters, artistes, and acrobats from the amusement park in the Prater Gardens. While in the hospital he had shown a particular interest in eye diseases, and now published his first work, a monograph entitled *A Manual of Health for the Tailoring Industry*.² The tailoring trade in the Vienna of that date could be regarded as one of the 'sweated industries'. 'The doctor can no longer ignore the standpoint which examines men not as isolated units but as products of their society,' Adler wrote in this pamphlet – a remark which naturally marked the young man down as a person of Socialist sympathies. In the 80's and 90's the student body was, in its overwhelming majority, nationalist. A very small minority became Marxian. Adler stood aloof in his student days, and only personal friendships connected him with members of the Socialist group. But as a young doctor he joined the group, in company with Raissa (his future wife). He was only a listener, not a debater or speaker. He was interested in the sociology, not in the economics of Marx.

As a doctor, Adler swiftly gained a reputation as a diagnostician, and showed in his treatments his characteristic mixture of boldness with caution. Without standing on his medical prestige, he would take pains to explain in the simplest terms to the patient or his family the nature of the disease. 'If you want to be a good doctor, you have

1. Bottome, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

2. *Gesundheitsbuch für das Schneidergewerbe*.

to be a kind human being,' the famous internist Nothnagel had told his students, and it was a remark which Adler always remembered. It was Nothnagel also who stressed that the physician must look at the patient as a whole and not be content with the examination of a particular organ or an isolated ailment. As time went on Adler's interest centred more and more upon the patient himself and upon the mental situation behind his illness. No doubt his extreme sensitivity to the sufferings of others was a contributory factor in urging him on to the plane of psychology. As a student he had shown a distaste for dissecting, and it is recorded that as a general practitioner he had keenly felt his helplessness when confronted with incurables, especially with young diabetics for whom the insulin treatment had not then been invented. His capacity for putting himself in the place of others and for feeling their suffering as his own was so great that it was never easy to recount to him an unhappy story: one hesitated before the details, seeing the troubled, almost agitated attention which his face betrayed. This sensitivity made it difficult for him to acquire any of that protective callousness exhibited by some members of his profession; but it brought him also his psychological insight, his power of identification with others.

In the 90's of the last century, little that was taught in the universities would have been useful to a doctor in his dealings with the mentally ill. Psychology was still traditionally a branch of philosophy rather than of medicine. A patient who suffered from pains or from some functional disturbance for which no organic lesion could be found would be diagnosed as a case of 'nerves' and sent to a neurologist, who, finding nothing wrong with his 'nerves', would in his turn dismiss him. Asked once how he had come to make his psychological discoveries, Adler answered: 'I have never understood, never been able to conceive that an ill person could not be helped. I thought to myself, it just cannot be, one *must* find a means, one *must* be able to help. And if one said to a person afflicted with mental

suffering, "you are only nervous", it seemed to me as though the doctor were to say to a person who had broken a leg and lay helpless on the ground, "Yes, you have a broken leg", and were then politely to take his leave.¹

As is well known, Viennese psychology was conceived in France. In 1882, the French neurologist, Charcot, had succeeded in securing the approval of the Academy of Science for those same cures by hypnotism which Mesmer, an Austrian, had practised in Paris a hundred years earlier and which the Academy of that day had branded as charlatanism. This official sanction was followed by a wave of enthusiasm for hypnotism, and students from all over Europe, including the youthful Freud, flocked to Paris to witness Charcot's demonstrations at the Salpêtrière. But Charcot's work proved to be more spectacular than lasting. He had thought of hypnotism as an abnormal manifestation related to hysteria and he was almost immediately challenged by Bernheim, of the independent school of Nancy. Bernheim showed that hypnotism, so far from being a morbid state peculiar to Charcot's hysterical cases, was a state akin to normal sleep and readily induced in the majority of subjects. He furthermore threw discredit on some of the manifestations which Charcot had demonstrated in hypnotized patients and declared them to be due to the unwitting suggestions of the operator. In a space of ten years the craze for hypnotism had spent itself and one heard little more of those dramatic performances by hysterics for which the clinic of the Salpêtrière had been famous.

Charcot died in 1892, his influence already on the wane. Adler was at that time still a medical student, and when, some years later, he turned his attention to psychology, it was by the work of Charcot's younger associate, Pierre Janet, that he was most influenced. Janet had produced brilliant descriptive accounts of hysteria, which was at that

1. Holub: *International Zeitschrift für Individualpsychologie*, 15. Jahrgang, Nr. 3/4.

time the mental illness most studied. In the theory of 'dissociation' which he advanced to explain the symptoms, he seems to have anticipated the conceptions both of the 'complex', as described by Jung, and of the 'unconscious', as described by Freud. 'Things happen', he wrote, 'as if an idea, a partial system of thoughts, emancipated itself and developed itself on its own account.'¹ In the creation of this 'complex' or, as he called it, 'dissociated psychological system', he saw the importance of repressed and forgotten emotions. Thus, he relates a woman's fear of blood to the frightening experience of her first menstruation, or the appearance of a rash on the left side of her face to her disgust at having once been required to share a bed with another child whose face had been covered by a similar rash on the left side. He found that when such 'dissociated' memories could be returned to consciousness by psychological analysis these symptoms disappeared.

Janet appears to have felt rather bitterly that the credit for making these discoveries had been taken from him. 'At this time', he writes, 'a foreign physician, Dr S. Freud of Vienna, came to the Salpêtrière and became interested in these studies. He granted the truth of the facts and published some new observations of the same kind. In these publications he changed first of all the terms I was using; what I had called psychological analysis he called psychoanalysis; what I had called psychological system . . . he called complex; he considered a repression what I had considered a restriction of consciousness; what I referred to as a psychological dissociation or as a moral fumigation he baptized with the name of catharsis. . . .'² To these criticisms Freud replied in a dignified way by pointing out that Janet had not followed up his own valuable insights. 'In Paris itself a conviction still seems to reign (to which Janet himself gave eloquent expression at the Congress in London in 1913) that everything in psychoanalysis is a repetition of

1. P. Janet: *The Major Symptoms of Hysteria*, p. 42.

2. P. Janet: *Principles of Psychotherapy* (Allen and Unwin, 1925).

Janet's views with insignificant modifications, and that everything else in it is bad. At this Congress, indeed, Janet had to submit to a number of corrections from Ernest Jones, who was able to point out to him his insufficient knowledge of the subject. Even though we deny his claims, however, we cannot forget the value of his work on the psychology of the neuroses.¹

Janet, we therefore learn from Freud's biographer, 'has erroneously been regarded as a predecessor of Freud's.'² However, if we are not to be permitted to accord him that distinction, he made a wealth of other observations and contributions to psychology which allow us to consider him as a predecessor of Adler. Janet was perhaps the first to attempt to grasp the neuroses as a unity, to form a picture of an underlying neurotic state of mind from which all the various and often contradictory symptoms might arise. In every neurotic, he maintained, one was able to discover a 'sentiment d'incomplétude', a 'sense of insufficiency'. 'These patients,' he said, 'feel weak, dissatisfied with themselves; their actions, ideas, feelings appear to them reduced, covered with a kind of veil. . . . They will be at the same time plaintive and agitated, they will commit all kinds of eccentricities because eccentricity excites them and draws attention to them. They must needs attract attention to themselves in order that people may take an interest in them, speak to them, praise them and, above all, love them.'³ In Janet's 'sentiment d'incomplétude' we may therefore recognize the origin of Adler's famous 'inferiority feeling', the basic factor, in his view, in every neurosis. 'Janet's emphasis upon the neurotic's "sentiment d'incomplétude",' he wrote, 'is so wholly in harmony with the results offered by me that I am justified in seeing in my

1. Sigmund Freud: *Collected Papers*, Vol. 1, 'On the History of the Psychoanalytic Movement' (Hogarth Press) pp. 316-17.

2. Ernest Jones: *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work*, Vol. 1 (Hogarth Press), p. 59.

3. P. Janet: *Major Symptoms of Hysteria*, p. 312.

work an extension of this most important fundamental fact of the mental life of the neurotic.¹

It is also evident that Janet came very near to discovering the organic basis of inferiority upon which Adler believed the psychic feeling of inferiority in many cases to be built. 'The dissociation,' he wrote, 'simply bears upon a function which for some reason has remained weak or disturbed. Many of our patients fall dumb after an emotion; but they were formerly inclined to stammer; their speech was quite insufficient. A girl's right leg becomes paralysed; the reason is that in her childhood her right leg was affected by rachitis.'² Janet had thus grasped the importance of childhood for the genesis of the neurosis and he had equally grasped the importance of those situations in the present, later to be named by Adler 'test situations', before which the neurotic is likely to fail and to resort to illness. As instances of such situations, he gives adolescence, 'when all the problems of life obtrude themselves at once and sometimes brutally, problems of love, of fortune, of occupation, of society, of religion,'³ marriage and 'the effort of adaptation to the character of the mate,' the entering upon a profession as well as adaptation to the circumstances of retirement and old age. In all such ways, he seemed to be advancing towards the Adlerian view of neurosis as a retreat into illness before the problems of life.

Here again, however, as in the case of his work on complexes and repressed emotions, Janet did not fully follow up his own discoveries. 'Notwithstanding his keen insight,' said Adler, 'he never entered the road to synthesis.'⁴ He did not arrive at the conception of neurosis as purposefully directed towards a goal, a conception which would have made all the apparent contradictions of the symptoms clear.

1. Adler: *Introduction: The Neurotic Constitution*.

2. P. Janet: *Major Symptoms of Hysteria* (New York, 1907 Edition), p. 335.

3. P. Janet: *Principles of Psychotherapy*, p. 161.

4. *Introduction: The Neurotic Constitution*.

Instead, he evolved the idea that neurosis was caused by a constitutional debility. The neurotic, he thought, had not the nervous stamina to cope with those 'test situations' which he had described. He clung to this view in spite of the objection of the Swiss psychologist, Dubois, that the fatigue of which the patient complained was only another symptom, that a sufferer, say, from agoraphobia (fear of open spaces), who collapses before the effort of being required to set foot in the street can nevertheless work vigorously for hours at his own gardening.

The result for a psychologist who mistakes a mere symptom for a cause is always the same; he is in the position of having been 'deceived' by his patient. Believing that his patients' fatigue was real, Janet prescribed rest in bed, the simplification of problems, and that general retreat from life for which it is the object of the neurosis to provide an excuse. The phrase 'nervous breakdown' provided a formula of 'retreat with honour' and became so popular with the general public that it lingered on for decades after the work of Freud and Adler had shown it to be meaningless.

The debt which Adler owed to Freud is perhaps as great as his debt to Janet, but it is not quite as easy to measure or to describe. Freud, when Adler first heard of him, was already at the culmination of his most creative period, although he was still suffering from that public indifference to which the revolutionary nature of his discoveries had condemned him. Having abandoned, as had other enthusiasts of the time, the hypnotic technique derived from Charcot, he had introduced his own methods of free association and analysis. He had noticed the importance of the erotic factor in hysteria and had widened it into a general theory of instinct and repression. He had shocked the public by pointing out the facts of infantile sexuality. What is undoubtedly his masterpiece, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, had been published in 1900.

It is not quite certain how Adler and Freud first met.

One version is to the effect that Adler first heard Freud lecture at the Viennese School of Medicine. 'The lecture was received very unfavourably. Freud had left in anger before the discussion started, and Adler supported him vigorously, later publishing a paper saying that it was necessary to give serious attention to Freud's ideas.'¹ Another version suggests that Adler's enthusiasm was awakened by his perusal of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. 'This man has something to tell us,' Furtmüller remembers Adler exclaiming with great earnestness, and when the book was ridiculed in the *Neue Freie Presse* he wrote in its defence.² Possibly, Adler had known of Freud since his student days and had championed his ideas in both these ways.

In 1902, Freud started, at Stekel's suggestion, a small discussion circle which met every Wednesday evening after supper at Freud's home. It consisted at first only of five members, Freud, Stekel, Adler, and two others. 'These first evenings,' says Stekel, 'were inspiring. We found some random themes to talk about. On the first night we spoke about the psychological implications of smoking. There was complete harmony among the five, no dissonances; we were like pioneers in a newly discovered land, and Freud was the leader. A spark seemed to jump from one mind to another, and every evening was like a revelation. We were so enthralled by these meetings that we decided that new members could be added to our circle only by unanimous consent.'³

It was three years later, in 1907, that Adler published his first work on psychology, a monograph upon the *Inferiority of Organs*, for which he had been collecting material for perhaps ten years. 'The origins of Individual Psychology lie in chapters on organ and constitutional pathology which are among the most abstruse in all medicine. Very few are qualified to read and to understand Adler's first epoch-

1. Orgler, *op. cit.*

2. Bottome, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

3. W. Stekel: *Autobiography* (Liveright, N.Y., 1950), p. 116.

making *Studie über die Minderwertigkeit von Organen*,¹ remarks Dr Béran Wolfe.¹ In spite of these intimidating words, the book is to be accounted difficult only by reason of the wealth of clinical data it contains and the number of technical medical terms which it employs. The ideas themselves are clear and easily comprehensible. The book moves with great boldness of thought from such a seemingly limited subject as the diseases of the kidneys through a study of childhood functional difficulties like bed-wetting to a grasp of the manner in which body and mind influence each other and finally to an entirely novel conception of the foundation of the neuroses. In the history of general medicine, the book marks one of the beginnings of what to-day has come to be known as constitutional pathology, while for Adler's own development it already contains the principal elements which, in their amplification, make up his psychological theory.

Adler's monograph brought him the respectful recognition of his medical colleagues in Vienna. By the Freudian circle it seems to have been regarded as a sideline, with implications which were not very clear from the point of view of the sexual theory. Although Freud's work is quoted, the book appeared to come more as a qualification than as a corroboration of his ideas. Thus, while Adler still conceded that the activities of the child are bound up with 'pleasure-seeking', in actual fact he traces the bad habits of children back to their origins in a defective organ rather than to some erotic source. 'Pleasure-seeking', where it exists, he regards as only a secondary manifestation, a consequence of the child's failure to train, to compensate, to attain to mastery over his defective functions.

Meanwhile the Freudian ideas were gaining ground. The year 1907, in which Adler published this monograph, also marks the entry into the circle of Bleuler and Jung. Their adherence meant a great gain for Freud's ideas. Bleuler was head of the Burghölzli Institute in Zürich, with Jung as his

1. Introduction to Adler's *Understanding Human Nature*.

assistant, and for the first time psychoanalysis had access to a public clinic where it could pursue its researches, and found its teachings incorporated into the regular curriculum of students of psychology. The Viennese circle, too, had now grown until it had become too large to meet in Freud's own house and a public hall had had to be hired. 'But I am sorry to say,' Stekel remarks, 'that the old harmonious atmosphere vanished. Quarrels among the pupils, discords and questions of self-esteem replaced the former spirit of close friendship.'¹

At the second Conference of psychoanalysts at Nuremberg in 1910 these differences began to take serious form. In his eagerness to win medical acceptance for his ideas, Freud wished to accord the foremost position to the new adherents from Zürich and put forward the suggestion that Jung should be made life president of the Association. The Viennese felt that it was they who had been the first champions of psychoanalysis. They resented the leadership of the movement being placed in the hands of the Zürich group and, more particularly, they resented the power which the office of President would give to Jung to examine all papers and to decide which should be published. 'I was against this motion,' says Stekel. 'I insisted that our new science would go down if it were not absolutely free. I mentioned how difficult it had been to place our first papers in the medical journals. If a life president had to be elected, no one but Freud had the right to hold this office. In this vein I spoke for almost half an hour. Following me, Adler made a speech sounding the same note. Then it was put to a vote, and a large majority was against the motion.'²

After this stormy first session, Stekel called a private meeting of the Viennese. In the midst of the discussion 'the door opened; we looked round and saw that it was Freud. He was greatly excited, and tried to persuade us to accept the motion; he predicted hard times and a strong opposition

1. Stekel, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 128.

by official science. He grasped his coat and cried, "They begrudge me the coat I am wearing;¹ I don't know whether in the future I will earn my daily bread." Tears were streaming down his cheeks. "An official psychiatrist and a Gentile must be the leader of the movement." He foresaw growing anti-semitism. We tried to persuade him that his misgivings were exaggerated. There was a long argument pro and con. Finally he proposed a compromise. We should elect a president to serve for two years, and every two years there should be a new election. We also agreed that there would be no censorship.²

Jung was therefore elected as president for only two years, a course which was probably wise in view of his later secession. Adler became the president of the Viennese branch of the Society and Stekel the vice-president. Another outcome of the disagreement over Jung's status was the founding by Adler and Stekel of an independent monthly journal devoted to psychoanalysis, to be known as the *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse*. Freud showed himself distrustful of this venture, which was plainly intended to keep the intellectual initiative from passing wholly to the side of Zürich. 'What kind of guarantee can you give me that this journal will not be directed against me?' he asked.³ Finally, however, he agreed to assume the editorship, with Adler and Stekel as assistant editors. To prevent 'deviations' from psychoanalytic doctrine, he insisted that all three editors had to be agreed upon the matter to be included in the publication.

But the journal was not destined to run for long under this triple alliance. The first deviation that was to split the ranks of the psychoanalysts, that of Adler, lay only four months ahead. Adler, says Stekel, 'was working on a theory which was different from that of Freud. He was intuitive

1. Presumably he was wearing the frock coat, the symbol of his profession.

2. Stekel, pp. 128-9.

3. *Op. cit.*, p. 129.

and full of new ideas, but at first tried to adapt his theory to Freud's. Freud invited him to give several lectures on his research as we all wished to know more about it in order to do him full justice. Adler was highly pleased. Once, while walking with me, he said "What's the matter with Freud? Is he really willing to compromise with me and to accept my deviations?"¹ Evidently Adler, although surprised at the latitude suddenly afforded him to express his point of view, had little suspicion that a break was imminent.

The three lectures in which Adler outlined his criticism of Freud's sexual theory and put forward his own concept of the masculine protest were given in January and February 1911. A discussion of Adler's ideas was then begun which extended through three further sessions. 'I was not prepared for what followed,' says Stekel. 'One Freudian after another got up and denounced, in well-prepared speeches, the new concepts of Adler. Even Freud read a paper against his pupil.'² 'The Freudian adepts made a mass attack upon Adler,' says Wittels, 'an attack almost unexampled in its ferocity even in the fiercely contested field of psychoanalytical controversy. I was no longer a member of the circle. Stekel told me that the onslaught produced on his mind the impression of being a concerted one. Freud had a sheaf of notes before him and with gloomy mien seemed prepared to annihilate his adversary.'³

The final session took place on February 22nd. Stekel attempted conciliation. 'Adler's concepts are a deepening and extension of facts already discovered by us and they are in no contradiction with them,' he said. Freud observed drily, 'When Stekel maintains that he finds no contradiction between these ideas and Freudian theory, I want to point to the fact that two of the participants do find a contradiction, namely Adler and Freud.' Steiner rose to say that

1. Stekel, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 141.

3. F. Wittels: *S. Freud, His Personality, His Teachings and His School* (Allen and Unwin, 1924)

Adler's adherents conducted arguments in a strikingly weak fashion and that Freud had postponed his feelings too long. 'Adler has tried to bring us, who gathered together to investigate the vicissitudes of the libido, nearer to surface psychology to such a degree that we might have to rename our society into whose programme and framework Adler's ideas do not fit at all,' he said. To those who were present, the remark sounded almost like a motion of censure, questioning the right of the President to be a member of the Society. In reply, Adler shrugged and remarked that 'had he been in Steiner's place he would not have had the courage to talk like that.' In the Committee meeting which followed the discussion, he resigned his position as President 'because of the incompatibility of my scientific position with my post in the Society.'¹ Stekel also resigned as Vice-President. Although still nominally a member of the Society, Adler did not trouble to attend any further meetings and the break between him and Freud was complete. Some months later, he resigned also from the Editorship of the Journal which he and Stekel had founded and then also severed all connexion with the psychoanalysts. Stekel remained for a while with Freud, partly, as he tells us, for financial reasons, partly out of attachment to the Journal. But eight other members left to form a separate group with Adler.

It is clear that the differences between Freud and Adler were primarily intellectual differences. The controversy as to whether men in general are more moved by the desire for power or by the desire for pleasure is almost as old as philosophy, Hobbes and Nietzsche upholding the one opinion, utilitarians and hedonists the other, and it was natural that when modern psychology arose, this fundamental cleavage should be perpetuated. It must also not be overlooked how much the disparity in age between the two

1. Quotations in this paragraph from the minutes of the meeting in question, as quoted by Kenneth Mark Colby, M.D., 'On the Disagreement between Freud and Adler' (*American Imago*, Sept. 1951, Vol. 8, No. 3).

protagonists contributed to their intellectual differences. Freud was Adler's senior by fourteen years – a gulf of almost half a generation. Freud was a student in the 70's, Adler in the 90's. In this space of time, new professors take the place of old, changes occur in the intellectual climate of a university, and perhaps even greater changes occur in the general spirit of the age. Freud was nurtured in the uncompromising mechanism of the Helmholtz school of medicine, but when Adler was in his formative years the influence of biology among the natural sciences was growing and, with it, new philosophies of evolution. The Victorians had invented the machine and they believed in a universe which worked, like a machine, according to the strict laws of cause and effect. But the twentieth century was to return to a belief in creative forces. Its universe was to be the expanding, growing universe of Einstein. Its biology, of which Bergson was the philosophic father, was to point out that a living organism bears no resemblance to a machine. An organism grows and repairs itself, a machine only wears away. An organism moves under its own impulsion; a machine is only set going by an outside agency. An organism cannot be understood in terms of strict cause and effect, but only in terms of its inner conditioned purpose. Adler grew up at the turn of the century, at the important moment when a decisive change was taking place in our conception of the universe.

As well as a disparity of age and of intellectual outlook between the two men, there were also temperamental differences. Freud had very much the style of thinking of an elder child; Adler probably reacted against him as he had reacted against his elder brother. Freud was therefore to be one of those who were to see Adler as quarrelsome and ambitious, while Adler was to see in Freud all the authoritarianism which he disliked. Intellectually, if the movement of Adler's mind could be described as lateral, that of Freud's might be regarded as vertical. Adler's thoughts made a wide, comprehensive sweep, moving outwards

towards the problems of man's adaptation to the external world. Freud's thoughts tended to ignore externals, to concentrate inwards, to bore deep towards such problems as that of the unconscious. Freud would always regard Adler's approach as superficial; Adler would always regard Freud's approach as distortingly narrow and one-sided. A warm personal relationship was never established between them. Even in outward manner and appearance they constantly seemed to contradict each other – Freud always elegant and careful in his choice of words, Adler always the 'common man', nearly sloppy in appearance, careless of cigarette ashes dropping on his sleeve and waistcoat, oblivious of outer prestige of all kinds, artless in his way of speaking although knowing very well how to drive his points home.

Once more, then, as in his youth, Adler found himself the leader of a rebel band. It was only about this time that he abandoned general practice to devote himself entirely to psychiatry and moved from his home in the Praterstrasse to a new top-floor flat in the Dominikanerbastei. The house in which he now lived formed part of the old town wall of Vienna, and the venerable and rather melancholy appearance of the neighbourhood earned it the nickname among the band of the Freudlosegasse.¹ There the rebels congregated weekly, and in spite of the material loss to them of leaving the Freudian circle, there must have been a certain feeling of exhilaration at their release. Their numbers included Professor Furtmüller, an authority on education, Dr Alexander Neuer, who was equally versed in philosophy and in psychology, Dr Erwin Wexberg, who had a large Viennese practice, David Oppenheimer, a doctor of philosophy, Dr Froeschel, the speech therapist, Dr Hilferding, Dr Frischauf, and Dr Otto Kraus. Calling themselves at first the 'Free Psychoanalysts', their discussions naturally centred upon thrashing out still further their differences

1. A pun, meaning either Joyless Street or Freud-free Street.

from the Freudians and in forming an independent platform. It soon became clear that the whole viewpoint of nineteenth-century mechanism upon which psychoanalysis was built must be discarded in favour of the purposive approach already implicit in Adler's views upon compensation. A basis for this was at hand in the evolutionary philosophy of Bergson, while – perhaps through a paper upon the subject contributed by Dr Froeschels to the *Vienna Journal of Medicine* – Adler's attention was drawn to Vaihinger's *Philosophy of As-If*, which expressed the modern, relativist attitude to knowledge and was premonitory of Einstein's work in physics. 'A fortunate circumstance made me acquainted with Vaihinger's ingenious *Philosophy of As-If*,' wrote Adler, 'a work in which I found the trains of thought suggested to me by the neuroses set forth as valid for general scientific thought.'¹

In 1912 Adler published his second and scientifically most important book, *The Neurotic Constitution*. Here was the final combination of his own discoveries with all that he had learned from Janet of the neurotic character and all that he had learned from Freud of mental mechanisms, the whole informed and given its coherence by his new purposive approach. 'With this work,' he told a Berlin friend, 'I have founded my Individual Psychology.'²

3. *Spread of Individual Psychology*

Adler was now 42 years old, only two years off the age at which Freud had been when he published his *Interpretation of Dreams*. He had fallen in love in his student days, had married two years later, in 1897, and had become the father of three girls and a boy. His wife, Raissa Timofeyevna

1. *The Neurotic Constitution*, p. 30.

2. Orgler, *op. cit.*

Epstein, came of a wealthy Moscow family owning interests in the Russian railways. After finishing her course at the Moscow gymnasium, she had gone abroad to complete her education, first to Switzerland, then to Vienna.

Small, combative, and highly intelligent, Raissa, like her husband, was a rebel, but perhaps not so tolerant a rebel. Imbued with a hatred of Tsarist autocracy, studying political economy, assertive of feminine rights, careless of her dress and uninterested in domestic details, she must have presented in those days the picture of the typical emancipated woman, and was certainly the opposite of that devoted *Hausfrau*, Adler's mother.

The couple lived poorly at first, for Raissa characteristically refused to accept any assistance from her family, while Adler was contributing to the upkeep of his own parents. But they seem in those days to have been extremely happy. Raissa, however, with her sharply formulated and provocatively offered opinions, and with her neglect of womanly accomplishments, could not be expected to fit very easily into the life of Vienna, where charm, tact, and elegance were the qualities most appreciated in her sex. The question of feminine equality was never in dispute between her and her husband, yet in practice she had to meet the challenge of his overwhelming personality. Hers was the usual problem of the emancipated woman who desires to be a wife yet is no longer willing to sink her life in her husband's work. Adler, as we have seen, was never a stay-at-home. At this period of his life he was also more than ordinarily busy. When he was not in his consulting room, he was out in cafés and clubs with his innumerable friends, and, when he returned home in the evening, he was studying until far into the night. Through all these difficulties Raissa retained her independence and her intellectual integrity, but for many years the couple pursued different courses, except in what concerned the children, and only in the last years of Adler's life came partially together again.

The year 1914 found Raissa and the children in Russia.

After the Sarajevo murder, Adler, apprehending the danger of war, sent an urgent telegram for the family to return. Raissa characteristically replied 'Shall wait'. In consequence, for five anxious months, Adler lived without news of the family, and for Raissa the journey home with the children was an ordeal. A friend of hers told Adler's biographer: 'A different Raissa had come back from Russia. I cannot explain to you what had taken place. I only knew that Raissa was utterly changed. She was no longer the ex-Russian student, with all that that implied, but a balanced woman of the world, well-dressed, well-groomed, taking her place as wife and mother with a dignified sophistication at first wholly strange in her. Her large and generous heart was still the same, but I think it was no longer disturbed and broken. It was as if Raissa had taken a new grip on the world, and now faced it, not with the mad audacity of her youth, but with a chastened and wiser courage. She had gone away wretched – like a human being who has lost his way in the world – and she came back having fought out the battle in her own soul, like a human being who has found the way to live, under whatever difficulties and provocations. I don't say that Raissa was any happier with Adler, for I saw no reason to suppose that they were until later, but from the time she returned from that Russian visit, Raissa was ready to play her part with strength and dignity in her own home.'¹

Adler served two years as a military doctor near the Russian front, first at Cracow, then at Brünn. He was thereafter transferred to the village of Petzenkirchen in charge of Russian prisoners-of-war suffering from typhus. In 1915, he returned to Vienna as head of a large hospital for wounded and shell-shocked cases. 'I may say without exaggeration,' he records, 'that the place was especially popular because I was most reluctant to send nervous soldiers back to the front.' One occasion on which he was compelled to pass a soldier out as fit tormented his mind to

1. Bottome, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

such an extent that he dreamed of himself as a murderer 'like Raskolnikov', and woke 'trembling and shuddering'. 'It was then that I stopped dreaming for the rest of my life,' he said, 'or rather, from then on I taught myself to forget before waking whatever dreams I had had; for I saw that I was trying to deceive myself into letting soldiers off from a return to their duties. I still tried to let them off in my waking hours, but at least I knew what I was up to.'¹

The war, which forced upon Adler's over-sensitive nature the spectacle of pain upon so huge a scale, which, furthermore, contradicted that feeling – deep enough to be called the *leitmotiv* of his life – for the all-inclusive fellowship of man, was a profound shock to him. 'Adler was never the same again after the war,' an old friend of his told his biographer. 'He was much quieter and stronger. One soon became conscious that he was no longer ready to squander his good spirits on any subject that came up; it was as if he had concentrated all his powers into a single purpose. In a sense he was not graver, but he used his wits more seriously.'²

The experience of the war provided the emotional basis upon which the rest of his life-work was built. It made him desire to bring his psychology before the general public as a therapeutic aid to good living and turned him into something of an apostle for that ideal of human fellowship which is summarized by the untranslatable German word *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*.³ The ideas which he now developed were already present in his earliest work, on Organ Inferiority, where he speaks of the 'moral demands' made by the environment upon the organs. They are first clearly stated in the lectures which he gave in 1913 at the Vienna *Volks-hochschule* and which formed the basis of his second most important book, *Understanding Human Nature*, published in

1. Bottome, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 106.

3. Literally 'feeling for the community', usually translated 'social interest'.

1917. From this time forward he puts the *Gemeinschaft*, or community, always in the forefront of his thought.

This new emphasis upon the community came as a shock to certain of his colleagues, who had regarded him chiefly as an exponent of Nietzsche's will to power. He was now beginning to speak in terms of that Christian neighbour-love which Nietzsche had attacked with the full force of his brilliant contempt. In actual fact, Nietzsche and Adler were always at diametrically opposite poles. By temperament, Nietzsche was an extreme introvert, who preferred to 'dwell on mountains, alone and out of season', while Adler was happiest always in society. Nietzsche saw nobility in every kind of military and aristocratic domination, while Adler regarded the desire for power and domination merely as the false goal of a neurosis. 'The striving of every living individual,' he wrote, 'is directed towards achievement, not towards power, which many represent as the outlook of Individual Psychology.'¹ Achievement is creative and life-enhancing, while domination over others is limiting and destructive. The contrast between Adler as the exponent of the power theme in psychology and Freud as the exponent of the pleasure theme is a valid one only if it be remembered that Adler was no Nietzschean.

In the early part of the 1920s, Adler was still largely unknown outside a small circle. The little group of twenty or more still came every Friday evening to the flat in the Dominikanerbastei, where the front door was left, characteristically, wide open. In addition to members from before the war, such as Neuer, Wexberg, and Oppenheimer, there were some new faces. There was Allers, who combined an encyclopaedic knowledge of pathology with an equally encyclopaedic knowledge of the lives of the saints, and who later gave Individual Psychology a religious direction with which Adler disagreed. There was Arthur Holub, the lung specialist, and his wife, Martha, the psychiatrist Novotny, who later succeeded to the post of Professor in Vienna

1. *Religion und Individualpsychologie*, p. 58.

University, the journalist Ladislaus Zilahi who, from 1922 until Adler's death, remained the faithful editor of the *International Journal for Individual Psychology*, and Dr Lydia Sicher, Adler's psychiatric assistant in hospital work, and who now, in Los Angeles, is still one of the most distinguished practitioners of his system. The composition of the group was also changing in the direction of including more educationists and welfare workers. It was joined by Professor Oscar Spiel and Professor Ferdinand Birnbaum, whose joint educational work will be referred to later. There were teachers like Regina Seidler and Alice Friedmann, child guidance workers like Ida Löwy, specialists in marriage problems like Dr Sophie Lazarsfeld. Many of these are working still, either in Vienna or in countries to which the political upheavals have driven them.

Dr Simon Stern, the speech therapist, who attended at this time, said: 'There came a moment, it seemed that it happened almost abruptly, when the large drawing room of the flat was too small, and a hall was hired in some institution or other. But quite soon this hall, also, was too small.' Almost before any of his friends had realized the fact, Adler had become a public figure. The intimate discussions became lectures, although, after they were over, the friends would still congregate in the Café Siller, down by the Danube Canal.

No doubt, to some of Adler's friends it appeared that he was now less accessible to them than before. He would never make distinctions among those whom he admitted to his intimacy, so that eminent professors and medical specialists from Vienna's Harley Street who wished to converse with him found themselves obliged to share him with numbers of half-cured neurotics and hangers-on by whom he was perpetually surrounded. To some of his friends it seemed as if the intellectual quality of his circle was deteriorating because of his insistence that nobody should be turned away. In addition to this, he seemed less ready to discuss theoretical issues of interest to them. It

was as if he had decided that his system of psychology was now in all essentials complete, as if he refused to waste time elaborating upon fine points or hair-splitting over definitions, but insisted upon getting down to the practical business of carrying his message out into the world. Outwardly, he was still the witty and genial figure whom they had always known, but inwardly, in the reticent world of his feelings, he had perhaps passed beyond the effervescent brilliance natural to youth, had become more serious, more possessed by the sense of the urgency of his task. He showed impatience with those who wanted to play with his ideas rather than to live them. This offended some of his followers, and Adler appears to have made little effort to soften the offence. Moreover, his indifference to his own intellectual reputation was extreme. 'Once,' said Dr Stern, 'Novotny and I really tried to stand up to Adler about a paper which a patient had offered for publication. "But this is rubbish," we protested. He replied: "But what happens if we refuse? She will be discouraged. If we accept it, she will be encouraged and will do better".'

For these reasons, Adler tended to lose touch with the more powerful men of his profession who might otherwise have become his supporters. His work carried him more towards the general public. Whether or not this is a matter to be regretted is still difficult to decide. As Professor Furtmüller, who never lost his friendship for him, put it: 'Our differences were the superficial differences of men whose aim was the same. I believed Adler would have done better by sticking to science and working through scientists; he believed in making his science universal and in imparting it directly to his fellow-men. Who shall say which of us is right? Time alone can tell.'¹ Now that more time has gone by, it is perhaps possible to say that there were both gains and losses. The ranks of his supporters became filled by persons who, however enthusiastic, were not qualified to make the same contribution to his psychology which the

1. Bottome, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

scientists would have made. The result was that, after his death, there were few among his supporters who were capable of keeping his thought in motion. His science came to depend too much upon his own personality. A persistent prejudice had also been aroused against him in the academic circles which he had offended, a prejudice which leads more often than not to his contribution being underrated or even to his work being dismissed without being studied. But Adler himself would perhaps have felt these losses to be less important than the gains. He perhaps cared more for the fact that he was able to draw to his side the best of the teaching profession in Vienna, and that his influence upon education would be felt in the happiness and moral well-being of succeeding generations. The teachers judged him as he wanted to be judged – by the effectiveness of his methods when applied to their own work – and they were not to be influenced in their judgement by academic prejudice.

As conditions became stabilized in Vienna after the war and the inflation, this side of Adler's psychology began to receive its opportunities. As after every great war, the problem of delinquent and homeless children was acute. Through the influence of Professor Furtmüller, Adler was invited by Glockel, the President of the City School Council under the Social Democratic Government, to help in the creation of child guidance clinics attached to the State schools. Adler was also appointed a member of the faculty of the Pedagogical Institute, which was under the direction of the Böhlers. There, in fortnightly lectures which, with clinical demonstrations and answers to questions, usually lasted about three hours, he was able to enlighten teachers as to his methods and to train the body of workers who were to run his clinics. He himself took over a clinic at the Kaiser-Franz-Josef Ambulatorium and in the end thirty other such clinics were functioning in various quarters of Vienna under the direction of his co-workers. Each clinic co-operated with a number of schools which had asked for

this co-operation, and in this way there was scarcely a school in Vienna where at least some of the teachers and parents had not come into contact with Adler's psychology. In addition, Adler gave once a month an open lecture at the Institute for Adult Education (*Volksheim*) for all parents, teachers and others interested in child welfare. The whole undertaking, clinics and lectures, was voluntary, the Federal Government providing the facilities but no subsidy, and it testifies to the power of Adler's ideas that so great a body of voluntary workers could be organized.

After ten years of struggle by the Adlerian reformers against the believers in the old authoritative type of education, the Vienna City Council finally sanctioned the founding of an experimental school to be run on the lines of Individual Psychology. The school – a high school for boys – started in September 1931 in the impoverished twentieth district of Vienna, under the direction of Professors Spiel and Birnbaum. Conditions were unusually hard. It was the time of economic depression and mass unemployment. Many of the children were underfed and arrived in rags. The general shortage of fuel was so great that the classrooms were barely warmed and throughout the bitter Viennese winter it had to be forbidden to open the windows. The school building itself was utterly inadequate. No courtyard or recreation ground existed, so that the children had to remain in the classrooms during the breaks.¹ The sanction of the authorities for starting the school contained the condition that no deviation must be made from the curriculum laid down for all other high schools. Spiel was thus not in a position to sacrifice mere instruction in order to attain other educational aims. The Adlerian school was no specially favoured educational experiment, but had the value of its methods tested under the harshest conditions. Some of the experiences derived from this experiment will be given in Spiel's own words in the last chapter of this book.

1. v. M. Ganz: *The Psychology of Alfred Adler and the Development of the Child* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953).

The Social Democratic Government of Austria chiefly lives in memory by reason of its vast slum clearance programme, which solved the Viennese housing problem. The establishment of child guidance clinics and other educational reforms brought about by Glockel in 1926 was another, and equally valuable, side of this Government's activity and attracted the world-wide attention of experts. Students came from all parts to study Viennese education and psychology, so that Adler began to acquire an international reputation. His Journal, written in the German language, had been founded in April 1914, but only five numbers appeared before the outbreak of war put an end to its publication. It was restarted as an international journal in the 20's under Zilahi's editorship, and in 1935 Adler founded his quarterly in the English language published in Chicago. The first international Congress of Individual Psychology was held in Vienna in 1924, and was the occasion for Adler to become acquainted with Dr Leonard Seif, of Munich, and others of his German adherents. Further conferences followed almost yearly, in Berlin, Munich, and Düsseldorf. In Berlin and Munich child guidance clinics were founded on the Viennese model.

Adler himself was now constantly receiving invitations to lecture abroad. He visited Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Denmark, and started from 1924 onwards an annual lecture tour in Holland where his influence has always been particularly felt. In 1926, he visited England on the invitation of the Serbian philosopher and founder of the New Europe Group, Metrinović, and an Individual Psychology Club was started in Gower Street. In the same year, Adler paid his first visit to the United States, where he remained until the spring of 1927, lecturing at Harvard and Columbia Universities and in New York. He returned there for a further lecture tour in 1928, and again in 1929, when he was appointed Visiting Professor at Columbia University. Since his own university of Vienna had turned down his candidature for the title of Privat-Dozent for which he had

presented his book *The Neurotic Constitution*, this was the first academic distinction which had been accorded him. In 1932, he accepted the appointment of Visiting Professor at Long Island College of Medicine, a post which he held until his death in 1937.

These last ten or fifteen years of his life were a time of ever more arduous public life. In the mornings there were lectures to university students, in the afternoons clinical demonstrations. Further lectures had to be given to post-graduate students and big, open lectures to the general public. Streams of private patients would occupy other hours of his time. Time had also to be found for the writing of his books and for the editing of the *American Quarterly*. It was perhaps his books that suffered most. Speaking, arduous though it was, suited his temperament; he liked immediate contact with his audience and had a perfect manner on the public platform. But he was uninterested in writing, and his books often bear the marks of the haste with which they were composed. He rarely now had opportunity for the physical exercise which he so much enjoyed, and its lack began to tell on his health. His only recreation was occasionally to slip off slyly by himself to the cinema. 'The pictures had several advantages for Adler,' says his biographer. 'He did not have to talk and so could spare his overworked voice. They left him amused but free, and yet never for a moment out of touch with the humanity he loved.'¹

4. Last Years

During the 1930s, the political scene was again darkening. The world slump, set off by the crash of the Austrian Deposit Bank, provided the economic impetus towards dictatorship. The fall of the Social Democratic régime,

1. Bottome, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

which had given Adler's work its facilities, was followed by the reactionary governments of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg.

Adler had always some difficulty in keeping his psychology free from political influence, for there were those among his adherents who would, had they been allowed, have given his group a reputation which had nothing to do with its scientific character. He himself, of course, was known to have socialist sympathies, but, except for one moment in the feverish days of 1919, when Vienna was starving, he never took any direct part in politics, nor did he ever receive reward or preferment from any government. Any sharply doctrinaire attitude in politics would have offended his spirit of tolerance. The sectarianism of revolutionaries would have seemed to him isolating and limiting and he would strongly have rejected their use of violence, coercion, and authority to attain their ends. To those who argued, in the manner of Marx, that economic change was necessary before social feeling could develop, he replied by asking 'Who but people possessed of social feeling could succeed in solving social problems?' All others, whatever ideals or doctrines they might profess, would be interested only in personal power. He pointed out that it is a tribute to the importance of social feeling that no political party dares openly to flout it, that all must at least profess to stand for the welfare of society. But too often, in political as well as in personal affairs, we are reminded of the woman who loved her little hen but threw flower-pots at her husband's head. Political parties must not be judged by their devotion to their little hens, but by their major relationship to society. They must be judged, moreover, 'not by their spoken words and sentiments, but by their actions.' Looking beyond programmes, Adler was ready to agree with any movement which indubitably showed by its conduct that it had the welfare of the whole of mankind in view.

Nevertheless, in spite of this strict neutrality, Adler's work in connexion with education in Vienna had definitely been helped by the interest of the Social Democrats. His

ideal of educating people for independence and responsibility was also different from the ideal of educating people for obedience to a reactionary government. The result was that in 1934 the State facilities accorded to his child guidance clinics were discontinued and the school started by Spiel was closed.¹ Equally in Germany, the rise of Hitler to power put an end to his work in that country.

Adler had seen the inevitable approaching and had urged his children to acquire a thorough knowledge of English so that they would be in a position to make their future in the United States. He himself had been much in the States ever since 1926, and even on his returns to Europe each year he had been so occupied with lecture tours in various countries that Vienna had seen him but briefly. His last visit to the city which he had loved so well took place in 1935. Raissa had already vacated the flat in the Dominikanerbastei, and the country villa at Salmannsdorf which he had bought but scarcely lived in was up for sale. He was still able to lecture, both publicly and to his students at the Café Siller, but Vienna, he found, was no longer alive. 'I want very much to get away from it,' he said. 'Our duty is always towards the living.'²

Raissa was already established in America. His daughter, Dr Alexandra Adler, who had won distinction in neurology at Vienna University, was to take up a Research Fellowship at Harvard.³ His son, Kurt, was to become a doctor in America, and his youngest daughter and her husband were also to emigrate there. There was only one member of the family who was not safely gathered to the other side of the Atlantic, his eldest daughter, Valentina, the child perhaps most akin to her father in spirit and possessed of his own gift of human contact. Valentina had married in Berlin a

1. 'The school was revived in 1946 and has had 3,300 visitors from Austria and abroad.' – Spiel (Letter).

2. Bottome, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

3. She is now President of the American Society of Adlerian Psychology and a practising psychotherapist.

Russian on the staff of the Foreign Minister, Radek, and had later returned with her husband to her mother's native land. In 1935 began the series of purges which culminated in the Moscow trials and implicated Radek. Valentina and her husband both disappeared, nor was Adler ever to learn his daughter's fate, for it was only after the 1939-45 war that the Russian Government vouchsafed the information of her death. 'Not to be able even to try to save her, that was to him unbearable,' said Raissa. But Adler, with his usual reticence, never allowed the extent of his grief and his anxiety to be divined.

It was politics which darkened the last years of Adler's life. One form of dictatorship had deprived him of his daughter, the other had destroyed the whole structure of his life-work on the Continent. But he went on working to rebuild in the free countries what had been lost. His last visits to England were paid in 1936 and 1937. Until this time his work in England had languished, largely owing to a lack of reliable colleagues. He had withdrawn his name from the original Metrinović group and in 1933 a new organization had been founded in which Dr F. G. Cruikshank was the leading spirit. But Cruikshank's death deprived this organization of much of its vitality, and it was not until 1936 that, by virtue of the organizing ability of one of the closest friends of his later years, Individual Psychology began to make headway in England.

These last visits aroused especially the interest of the clergy. The Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool, Dr Downey, acted as Chairman for Adler's lecture in 1936, and, at the time of Adler's death the following year, it had been arranged for him to give a lecture before about a thousand of the Anglican clergy under the chairmanship of the Archbishop of York, Dr William Temple. 'In the long run,' Adler remarked, when told of this programme, 'I think it will be the clergy who will do most to spread my psychology in the future. There are good reasons for this. The clergy are the chief practitioners of social interest already, by

profession. And what especially appeals to me is that they need not take money from their patients. I have always felt it a disadvantage to psychiatrists that there must be the question of money between them and their patients.'

Adler's attitude to religious questions is set forth in an interesting exchange of views with the Protestant pastor, Ernst Jahn, and published in Germany in 1935 under the title *Religion und Individualpsychologie*. 'Every clear and practical thinker will admit,' he writes there, 'that, with insignificant exceptions, common ground exists between religion and Individual Psychology. It is found often in the nature of their ideas, attitudes and intentions, and always in their fundamental aim, the perfection of mankind.'¹ Nevertheless, in spite of these similarities, Adler declined to turn his work into a Christian psychology in the manner already attempted by Künkel and Allers. 'The scientific nature of my work must be guarded against the hard and fast criteria of other movements which lie outside science,' he wrote. 'It cannot possibly make these criteria its own.' 'It is not my office,' he wrote again, 'and I have never taken it upon myself to mete out praise or blame to movements which, like Individual Psychology, have the good of the whole of mankind in view. And I cannot suppress my feelings of reverence and admiration for the great things achieved by such movements. But Individual Psychology must make use of purely scientific methods, must remain a pure science and enter people's lives in this inalterable form. . . .'²

Individual Psychology, Adler often remarked, is like a basket of fruit. It must be there for anyone to partake of who feels inclined. It should not link itself with other movements, lest by doing so it exclude persons of another persuasion from partaking in what it has to offer. The aim of Individual Psychology is always 'the good of the whole', never of a section. This also is its criterion in judging its compatibility with the work of other movements. 'Other

1. p. 64.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 64.

movements,' he warns, 'which have independently made the community the guiding aim of their endeavours must show chapter and verse to prove that the good of the whole is safeguarded not only in their words or in their intentions, but in their deeds. When it is a question of effects lying in the remote future, a judgement is not always easy, since nobody can boast of possessing the absolute truth. I would regard as valuable any tendency whose final aim guarantees the good of the whole. The standpoint of the founder of Individual Psychology towards all religious and political parties follows from these my personal views and convictions. . . .'¹

Adler was not, perhaps, a believer in supernatural forces, but he could recognize the social value which such beliefs have always possessed for a community. The concept of God arose, in his view, 'from the ever-present feeling of inferiority of necessitous mankind,' and incarnated as compensation for this feeling 'mankind's ideal goal of perfection.' 'From the point of view of Individual Psychology, the conception of the Godhead and its enormous importance for mankind can be understood, recognized, and prized. It personifies man's feeling for what is great and perfect. It acts as a bond, uniting individual and community, setting them towards a goal which heightens their feelings and emotions and which thus stimulates their present striving.'²

If he criticized religion at all, it was for certain modes of thought which he believed to be inherited from a past when men had a less-developed sense of causal relationships. This applies especially to the religious conception of sin, guilt, and repentance. 'I speak, not of guilt, but of error, arising in childhood years and persisting only because the mistaken notion is never formulated in word or concept and thus remains beyond the grasp of the developed intelligence.'³ . . . Sorrow on that account, in the sense practically of a feeling of guilt, would demonstrate a frame of mind in the individual which, as long as it endures, promises no

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 63.2. *Op. cit.*, p. 59.3. *Op. cit.*, p. 85.

cure. Gloomy dwelling upon the mistakes of childhood, on false opinions, on misunderstood organ inferiorities and their often unsuccessful psychic compensations, on the conclusions wrongly drawn from incorrect upbringing, such as pampering, which plays the chief role in unsuccessful life-styles, is a hindrance to gaining courage for new life and must be set aside by means of an all-human understanding.¹

Adler's final faith was always in scientific thinking and his religion was that Humanity with which, from his earliest years, he had felt himself to be in such close kinship. 'When we consider the matter soberly,' he writes, 'we find that the difference in the form taken by the ideal is not the essential point. Whether one names the highest ideal as God or as Socialism or, like ourselves, as pure community feeling, . . . we always see mirrored the powerful goal of human overcoming, with its promises of fulfilment and grace.'² 'The feeling for the community is the guiding aim, the ideal condition, ever unattainable in its fullness, but ever beckoning and pointing the direction. This feeling, which derives its power from the logic of social existence, favours and blesses those who follow it and punishes the erring and the hostile. Its growing influence in the life of the peoples creates social arrangements and restraints in pursuit of its eternal aim, strengthening the weak, supporting those who stumble, healing the mistaken. Mankind, which has undertaken to make itself the centre of earthly, even of cosmic events, can only bring its task nearer to realization if the physical and spiritual good of the whole is seen as the irrefutable factor in all life's reckonings.'³

Adler died in Aberdeen in May 1937, painlessly and immediately of a heart attack. For him, as Jahn rightly remarked, the affinity of man and earth was the foundation of his psychological thinking. His was essentially a humanist intelligence, at once modest and hopeful, sceptical and idealist, one of that long line of thinkers which begins with Socrates and which finds its representatives in every genera-

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 69.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 61.

3. *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

tion. It was not his function to carry us out beyond ourselves, but to teach us to be ourselves. The problems he grasped and solved were the problems connected with our daily existence on what he called this 'poor earth-crust', and he professed to do no more.

CHAPTER 2 : Formation of the Life-style

1. Heredity

Adler approached psychology from the point of view of the general practitioner of medicine. He came to the mind through the body, his starting point being the study of the physical deficiencies which are transmitted by heredity.

At the time when he published his first monograph on Organ Inferiority, the attention of practitioners had become focussed chiefly upon the germs, viruses, and other external causes of illness which the microscope was in process of revealing. This had reinforced the tendency, inherent in the nineteenth century's mechanical way of looking at things, to regard the body as no more than a vast aggregation of cells which broke down under some external attack. Practitioners were inclined to treat the disease rather than the person. Adler took the opposite line. His work on constitution was a tacit reminder that in all illness there is also an internal predisposing factor. The really sound organism is generally able to resist the attacks of germs. It is the already weak or susceptible organ which is likely to succumb to attack, and to succumb with a degree of severity which – other things being equal – varies with the extent of the original weakness. This point of view explains why some people suffer from a certain infection while others equally exposed remain immune. It also explains why specific illnesses are so often found to run in families. It is not generally the case that the illness itself is inherited. What is inherited is the constitutional weakness of a certain organ, so that the various members of a family who carry this weakness are open to the same liability.

Adler emphasized that the body is far more than a mere collection of cells – the view that was held by the famous Virchow. It is above all a series of organs bound together into great, interrelated systems to serve the needs of the organism. It is a purposive or functional arrangement. There are the sense organs, with all their complicated apparatus for conveying visual, aural, tactile, and other information to the organism, so that it may orientate itself to its environment. There are the respiratory, digestive, urogenital, vascular, locomotive, endocrine, and nervous systems, each of which is to be regarded as a functioning whole containing a very varied assortment of organs. The digestive system thus extends right through the body, from the mouth – in itself a very complicated apparatus – to the stomach and intestines down to the organs of excretion. The respiratory system includes nose and lungs and every organ that has to do with the function of breathing. The urogenital system includes the kidneys, bladder, and sexual apparatus. All these unit-systems have also their nerve superstructures linking them with the brain through which they transmit and receive impulses.

During gestation, in the embryo, these unit systems grow and develop as wholes. If there is a faulty embryological development of one or other of these systems and its nervous superstructure, the result may be that the fault will show itself in various ways throughout the whole system. In one case it may be more marked in one organ of the system, in another case it may be differently localized. Illnesses are therefore to be grouped according to the organ system which is seen to be affected. If one observes that one member of a family suffers from nasal catarrh, another from lung tuberculosis, while yet others are troubled by laryngitis or hay fever or asthma, and a last has died of pneumonia, one may be fairly certain that the internal factor connecting all these illnesses is the inheritance of a weak respiratory system.

Usually, it is not very easy for the physician to detect weaknesses in the internal organs until some actual illness

in his patient occurs to reveal their existence to him. But Adler pointed out various ways in which a diagnosis might be helped. In many cases, where the system comes to the surface of the body its faulty embryological development will be revealed by certain external blemishes, malformations or 'stigmata'. These blemishes may be unimportant in themselves, but they can portend a more serious malformation of the inner organs of the system with which they are connected. Malformed ears may denote some weakness in the auditory apparatus. Badly formed teeth and light-coloured gums are often to be associated with diabetes. 'Nasal stigmata,' wrote Adler, 'thickening of the mucous membrane, polyps, adenoid vegetation, anomalies of the mouth, the tongue, the teeth, of the hard and soft palate, of the tonsils, are related to inferiorities of the organs of respiration and to a disposition to illnesses connected with them.'¹ Since the respiratory and the digestive tracts have a common embryological development, many of these signs may be indicative of future illnesses connected with the latter. Reflexes are also significant. Associated with digestive complaints there is often a failure or a heightened excitability of the reflex of the palate. The abnormal functioning of the conjunctival reflex may denote an eye inferiority, even though at the time sight be normal. Even birthmarks, which, until Adler wrote, had never been given serious attention, may have some connexion with the organs lying in their vicinity. In the case of a urogenital inferiority, it is not uncommon to find moles or birthmarks in the region of the kidneys or the bladder or in the groin. This may point to a 'segmental' inferiority. For, in the course of embryological development, it may happen that the top, middle, or lower segments of the body are of uneven growth. Perhaps the top part of the body may be well developed while the lower part may be slightly malformed and occasion a weakness in all the sexual and excretory functions. There are even cases where one side of the body is less

1. *Über Minderwertigkeit von Organen* (Wien, 1907), p. 33.

developed than the other, with defects of eye, ear, limb, and inner organs all upon the same side.

This is the gist of Adler's theory of organ inferiority upon its purely medical side. We can now go on to see how he was able to connect the body with the mind and to make this theory the basis of his psychology. The important point here is that the weakness of the organs will be reflected in their functioning. It may be that one of the sense organs is particularly developed, while another is neglected. Some people take in impressions chiefly by means of the eyes, others by means of the ears. This is so common that it has led to the classification of people into visual, auditive, olfactory, and other types according to whether they make predominant use of one organ or of another. In teaching, said Adler, 'we must find out which sense organ is the most used and what type of sensations fascinate the child most. There are many children who are better trained in seeing and looking, others in listening, still others in moving, etc. . . . If a teacher finds a child of the visual type, he should understand that he will have things easier in subjects in which he has to use his eyes - as, for example, geography. It will be better for him to see than to listen to a lecture.'¹ The inferiority of an organ is, in fact, the basis for all those psychophysical types which have been described by later investigators. Where it is a question of endocrine functioning, for instance, we have the well-known hyperthyroid, pituitary, and other types which have been subtly characterized by Kretschmer.

It is especially during childhood that we can detect the existence of organ inferiorities which may predispose a person to future illness. The child has not yet fully learned to co-ordinate and master the use of his functions, and therefore any weaknesses which he has brought with him into the world are very clearly displayed. Bed-wetting, for instance, prolonged beyond the normal time when a child should have mastered the function of the bladder, may lead

1. *Education of Children*, p. 185.

us to suspect a urogenital inferiority. Once he has succeeded in mastering the function we may see no further sign of such inferiority until, late in life perhaps, he succumbs to some bladder complaint or kidney disease. The following case, which connects a child's difficulties in learning to speak with adenoids, adenoids with a succession of complaints of the deeper-lying digestive organs, and this digestive inferiority with the paternal inheritance, may stand for many which Adler gives in support of his theory of constitution and will be sufficient to exemplify his diagnostical method:

'Frederica U., six years old – the father is corpulent and belongs to a family inclined to corpulence – fell ill with frequent and very painful diarrhoea. At the age of two she had experienced a prolonged catarrh of the stomach. She was being treated by a dentist on account of her malformed teeth when a renewed attack of colic turned to appendicitis, and she was operated upon. Two years before she had undergone an operation for adenoids, and she still spoke haltingly and with a nasal intonation. The reflex of the palate was exceedingly pronounced. I learned that the father, in later life a healthy man, had suffered until puberty from nightly bed-wetting and involuntary stool evacuations, as had several of his now corpulent brothers and sisters.'¹

Psychologists like Janet and Freud had already traced a connexion between childhood and the development of neurosis in later life. Adler now took up this question from the point of view of his theory of constitution. It was clear that many of the bad habits of children would have their basis in a physical difficulty, and that any such difficulty would have great significance for the child's psychic development. We have only to consider the insistent demand which the environment, in the person of the parents, is making upon the child to adapt and to master his functions. The parents are watching him, training him, directing him, perhaps punishing his lapses and showing their pleasure at

1. *Über Minderwertigkeit von Organen*, p. 39.

his successes. If he wishes to resist the parents he can do so best through the weak organ; if he wishes to co-operate with them, he knows that the best pleasure he can give them is to succeed with the weak organ. The organ 'speaks' before he has command of language. In any case, whether the child is co-operative or hostile, the attention both of himself and his parents is focussed upon the source of his weakness. Often one notices how the child forms the habit of touching the weak organ, in the same way as one has an involuntary tendency to be constantly examining a sore place or to feel with one's tongue for a tooth that has been aching. This anxious interest in the defective part can give rise to many significant little habits of scratching, blinking, nailbiting, thumbsucking, boring in the nose, touching the genitals, playing with the excreta. Stool difficulties may thus become the basis of what has been called the 'anal' character. The child's anxious comparison of his own sexual organs with those of other children of the same sex may result in certain conditions in the formation of homosexual attractions. Especially in the case of a urogenital inferiority there is great probability of encountering those early masturbatory activities which had been noticed by Freud. 'The constant interest in the evacuation of the bladder, accompanied as it is by inferiority of the sexual organs, brings it about that side by side with the bed-wetting there arises, perhaps regularly, a second bad habit, the autoerotic touching of the genitals. This gives further occasion for deviations in the psychic development. Precocious autoerotic activities render the child less apt for education, more opposed to restraint, and the control of undesirable anti-social impulses becomes more difficult. The child has difficulty in accommodating himself to his milieu and becomes naughty and unruly. Traits of cowardliness, shyness, and anxiety are all strengthened, and he seeks with uncanny persistence consolation and protection from the knowledge he has gained of "sin" in childish superstition and religious phantasies.'

Difficulty with the bladder would not, of course, be alone sufficient to account for the frequency with which early masturbation is to be observed. We have also to consider the fact that not only the urinary system but all the organ systems have their connexion with the sexual apparatus by means of which hereditary defects are transmitted. 'This co-ordination between the sexual apparatus and the other organs,' says Adler, 'plays a great role. The simultaneous inferiority is often only slightly apparent, yet it is so frequently found that I would go so far as to declare that there is no organ inferiority without an accompanying inferiority of the sexual apparatus. This assumption is made likely at the outset by the very fact of heredity in the theory of organ inferiority. For since the hereditary weakness must be preformed in the spermatozoon and the ovulum, it is understandable that the place where these are developed, in final measure the whole sexual apparatus, participates in the inferiority.'¹ Accordingly, the psychic superstructure of a person, in so far as it reflects his physical constitution, will always show some slight sexual disturbance. 'When we remember that all defective organs are perhaps regularly accompanied by defective sexual organs . . . that almost all bad habits of children thus affected are also accompanied by autoerotic touching of the genitals, we must lay it down as a consequence that the possession of inferior organs can lead with special ease to sexual precocity and early masturbation. . . . This makes clear the regular finding of a "sexual motif" in the psychoneuroses.'²

Adler's view was later confirmed statistically by the quite independent investigations of Kyrle. 'The doctor,' Kyrle writes, 'who has never occupied himself directly with the study of the procreative glands will naturally believe that the greatest percentage of male individuals come into this world possessing normal glands. Deformities would appear to him exceptional. . . . But it is known that there are inner defects of the organ which only microscopic examination

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 59.

2. *Op. cit.*, pp. 70-1.

reveals. . . . It would be thoroughly mistaken to believe that every new-born boy is the bearer of normal testicles. On the contrary, all previous research points to the fact that the majority of male persons enter the world with under-developed procreative glands. In the examination of the testicles of 110 boys of all ages up to eighteen years old, I was able to find evidence of marked under-development in eighty-six. The remaining twenty-four were in no way all normal. . . . As normal were to be indicated the testicles of ten boys With the beginning of puberty, the majority of the existing weaknesses are made good, the organs reach a certain functional level, but their microscopic build still differentiates them, especially in cases where marked developmental difficulties have occurred, from the normal ripened testicle.¹

Here we can recall Darwin's thesis on natural selection. It is to be admitted that Nature eliminates all organisms which are unable to reach a certain functional valency. The thoroughly defective sexual apparatus does not reproduce itself. Infant mortality accounts for many whose other inferiorities are too great for survival in the prevailing conditions. In the course of evolution there has been a slow improvement in the stock brought about by the elimination of the unfit. We can see this in the fact that those organs which were developed first in the evolutionary order show the fewest inferiorities, are the more nearly perfect. Nevertheless, the process of selecting the fittest is not one of purely mechanical elimination. Adler pointed out that the organs, like all living things, contain reserves of power which can be brought into play in order to compensate original defects. Just as pruning stimulates a tree to increase its growth, or breakage of a bone causes an extra mass of callous bone to grow round the seat of the fracture, or inoculation is met by the production of antibodies in sufficient quantities to safeguard the organism against further infection by that particular disease, so do all

1. A. Holub: *Die Lehre von Organminderwertigkeiten*, p. 436.

deficiencies call into existence a striving to over-compensate them. A living thing does not merely repair any damage which it may have suffered; it tries to strengthen itself so that it shall not be damaged in the same way a second time. Thus, while the unfit are eliminated as Darwin described, the survivors in the battle for life are constantly improving and strengthening themselves, reaching forward, as Adler said, from 'a minus to a plus situation'.

In many cases an organism is capable of repairing an injured or weak part directly. A cut or a burn is healed and an extra mass of hard skin, a scar, is grown to protect the place from further injury. An athlete's muscles strengthen themselves to meet the extra burden that is laid upon them. A chronically weak heart enlarges itself in an attempt to cope with its function. Sometimes an originally weak organ may reach such perfection that only certain outward stigmata or some over-emphasis of its functioning would lead us to suspect that an inferiority had once been present. Where the organs lie in pairs, it may be the originally weak member of the pair which seems to be stronger than its healthy twin. But often direct compensation is not possible. Nature has provided an insurance for this in the case of those organs which lie in pairs, so that if, say, one lung is rendered useless by an attack of tuberculosis, the other develops until it can do the work of two. In other cases, the compensation has to be still more indirect. A person who is born blind is capable of developing an unbelievably acute tactile sense. Where infantile paralysis has crippled the lower limbs there follows a muscular strengthening of the arms. Nature, we see, is not mechanical but always purposive in its activity. Its aim is the repairing and strengthening of the whole. For Nature, the part exists for the sake of the whole, and, if one part will not suffice to its work, it makes some other ingenious arrangement to ensure that the whole be preserved.

Here we may make another transition back from body to mind. The brain is not only the co-ordinator and director

of the bodily ensemble; it may also be considered as the chief organ of indirect compensation. We have seen how the child's attention becomes riveted upon the weak part. From this will arise a heightened psychic striving to overcome the observed weakness, a striving which may eventually lead the individual to successes far greater than those achieved by the normally constituted person. We can readily understand how this may happen if we take a simple example. Let us suppose that a person begins life with weak respiratory organs and suffers in consequence from speech difficulties. His parents are constantly correcting his enunciation. He feels that he is not being properly understood and that he cannot make his wants known. He struggles with his speech and finally he begins to succeed. The very success which he has achieved will stimulate him to continue along the same line. He begins to take pleasure in listening to his own growing clarity of enunciation. Perhaps he carries on conversations with himself or with an imaginary child who understands his speech better than his real companions seem to do. Later, he takes passages from the poets and recites them aloud to himself. His parents overhear him and praise him, and he is asked to recite before the neighbours. At school he becomes the best reader in his class. It is suggested that he go to a dramatic academy and he ends by becoming a celebrated Shakespearean actor. The original speech difficulties out of which his career grew will long since have been overcome and forgotten. Perhaps, now and then, he will have an attack of laryngitis which will prevent his appearance on the stage, and which will be put down to the 'strain' upon his voice. Perhaps he will at some period suffer from pneumonia, but this too will hardly be likely to remind him of those early struggles with his speech. Yet his accomplishments and his illnesses will all lie in a hidden relation.

The importance of organ inferiorities thus transcends by far their merely medical significance. They initiate strivings which may persist for a lifetime and carry the person on

from weakness to success, to over-compensation and towards perfection. Historical examples are numerous of outstanding men who were born with serious bodily deficiencies. Byron, who was lame, became a notable swimmer. Other persons whose physical movements were for some reason curtailed during childhood take to riding, motor racing, aviation, become explorers, mountaineers, acrobats, or dancers. People suffering from respiratory difficulties become not only actors, but singers, political orators, players of wind instruments. The great orator of the French Revolution, Mirabeau, suffered from speech defects as a child. Demosthenes, who stammered, stood on the shore of the Piraeus, filled his mouth with pebbles and tried to shout down the waves. Children who have stomach trouble, who must in consequence be kept on special diets, get the feeling of being deprived. Their interests are turned in the direction of acquiring, and they may become collectors of *objets d'art* or millionaires. Rockefeller suffered all his life from dyspepsia and Henry Ford wrote a book upon dietary. 'Musicians not infrequently suffer from affections of the ear or have suffered from such in their childhood. The classical example is Beethoven. Mozart had a malformation of the ear. . . . Whoever knew the composer Bruckner, will remember that he had a birthmark near the malar bone in the vicinity of the ear-lobe. . . . Bruckner, like perhaps all great composers, reached his extraordinary artistic eminence by overcoming his aural inferiority and transforming it into a genius's capacity for creative hearing.'¹

Examples of over-compensation for short sight, astigmatism, and other visual defects are especially numerous. They range from astronomers like Kepler to painters like Manet and poets like Schiller and Milton. Sometimes the defect even becomes the basis of an artistic technique, as when the impressionist Manet, on first trying on a pair of glasses, exclaimed: 'But with these I see the world just like

1. *Über Minderwertigkeit von Organen*, p. 33.

Bouguereau!'¹ The ascription of blindness to poets like Homer and Ossian, of whom nothing is known, is a popular folk tradition which embodies a truth of common observation. The character of the 'seer' is developed by the difficulty of seeing, and the loss of outward vision is compensated by a concentration upon the world of inner images. The brother of Alphonse Daudet relates of Daudet's extreme short sight: 'It compelled him to live inwardly, it brought him the gift of a curious and precious capacity, a capacity which I have met with only in him, for a type of inward gaze or – if you prefer the word – an intuition of unusual strength. Thanks to this, he is able, if he cannot see with his eyes the face of his interlocutor, to guess his appearance and at the same time to penetrate what is passing in the mind of the other. I cannot myself explain this high development of insight in one who is so shortsighted. Going through life like a blind man, he gives in each of his books evidence of an exceptionally minute gift of observation of almost microscopic exactitude.'²

Similarly, the German poet Gustav Freytag wrote in an autobiographical passage: 'I noticed in class that I was very short-sighted. When I complained of this to my father during the holidays, he advised me to go my way through the world without the help of glasses. I followed his advice and used glasses only in the theatre and to see pictures. I sought to overcome the inconvenience which this defect caused in society and was able to pass harmlessly by much that would have disturbed a person of sharper sight. . . . Pleasure in the beauty of flowers, in fine dresses, in remarkable faces and lovely women, in radiant glances and in friendly greetings from a distance were things enjoyed by others which I had to do without. But since the spirit adapted itself adroitly to this deficiency, there developed in me early a good understanding of such manifestations of life as came within my compass and a swift intuition of much that was not visually clear to me. The limited number

1. Orgler, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

2. Holub, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

of my observations allowed those that were received to be worked upon more quietly and perhaps more deeply.¹ 'Many persons,' said Adler, 'have resented the attention that I and my colleagues have drawn to this compensatory factor in the work of artists of genius or of high talent, and they attempt to deny what our experience is constantly confirming. But their objections are due to a misunderstanding of the findings of Individual Psychology. We are not so foolish as to suppose that organic imperfection is the efficient cause of genius. . . . In our view a man of genius is a man of supreme usefulness. . . . In the choice of its specialized *expression*, however, the highest talent is conditioned by the organism with which it is endowed, from the greatest *defects* of which it gains its particular mode of concentration.'²

From the psychological point of view, it is not so much the medical significance of an inferiority but the manner in which the child experiences it which is the important motive for compensation. What the child with weak sight actually experiences is that, sitting at the back of the class, he cannot see the demonstrations which the teacher is making on the blackboard and he may therefore feel himself to be more stupid than the other children, while, on the playing field, he cannot see the ball coming and may therefore feel himself more clumsy than they. 'There are many children who at one time had rickets and who, though cured, still bear the marks of the disease; crooked legs, clumsiness, lung catarrh, a certain malformation of the head (*caput quadratum*), curved spine, enlarged ankles, feeble joints, bad posture, etc. What remains psychically is the feeling of defeat which they acquired during the illness, and their consequent inclination to pessimism. Such children see the ease with which their comrades carry on, and are oppressed by a feeling of inferiority. They undervalue themselves and take one of two courses. Either they completely lose confidence and make little if any attempt at

1. Holub, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

2. *Problems of Neurosis*, p. 35.

progress, or they are spurred on by the seeming desperation of their plight to catch up with their more fortunate play-mates in spite of their physical handicap.¹

The importance of making allowance for a child's physical handicaps may be illustrated by a little example. We sometimes come across a child with an inherited bone-deafness which neither the parents nor the teacher have discovered. In ordinary conversation the child can help himself out by reading lip-movements and, in certain situations, as in a train where there is vibration, he can hear better than the normal person. But from his place in the class, he does not always catch what the master is telling the children to write, especially if the master is turned away, so that he cannot also watch him. So what does he do when he fails to hear? He has come to depend on his eyes, and he takes a surreptitious look at his neighbour's exercise book in order to glean an indication of what has to be done. His action is noticed and he is summoned from his place in the class and charged by the master with attempting to cheat. Like all children, he has not the conceptual grasp of the situation nor the adult's command of language which would enable him to explain. Nor does he know that he is deaf and that the other children are not. He is now put at a desk at the back of the class where he cannot overlook his neighbour's work. Here he sits in shame, hearing less than before. Naturally, his exercises show marked deterioration – circumstantial evidence that his previous good standard was only obtained by copying from others. Henceforth the child may lead an isolated social life, despised by his comrades as a cheat and believing himself to be stupid.

Since it is the inferiority as actually experienced that matters, those outward blemishes or stigmata which are not important to the doctor, except as indications, may be vitally important to the child. Children who must have the growth of their teeth corrected by wearing plates, who carry such disfigurements as protruding ears or a hare-lip,

who suffer from eczema, impetigo, and other degrading skin diseases, may be more affected by these blemishes than by a medically important defect. There are many variations in physique which cannot be classed as inferiorities at all from the medical point of view, but which must be included because they carry some social stigma or social handicap. 'As regards red hair,' said Adler, 'we know how it lays children open to teasing from which they suffer. Boys more than girls, for in girls it is often thought pretty. Red-haired boys, on the other hand, are not particularly liked. These are crude prejudices, archaic superstitions, but the result is that we often find problem children among those who are red-haired.'¹ As another example, shortness of stature has nothing to do with health, but it has played a great part in the lives of many famous men. Napoleon, Nelson, Wellington, Lloyd George were all short men. The short man desires to be greater than all the others. In testing himself against his taller companions he develops a high degree of combativeness, and he often ends as a general, a leader of men, or an orator, who stands before others on a platform in a heightened perspective. One man, of very short stature, after a distinguished career as a general, occupied his retirement by writing a biography of the hero who had been his life-inspiration, David, the slayer of the giant Goliath.

Unusual ugliness, even though accompanied by good health, may have a deep psychological significance. People turn away from the ugly child, their eyes do not light up with warmth and friendliness when he comes into a room, his mistakes are not forgiven him as are those of a child possessing charm and looks. 'Think what it feels like to be an ugly child!' said Adler. 'He is at a great disadvantage. Perhaps he is the child of a race mixture which does not give attractive results, or which meets with social prejudice. If such a child is ugly his whole life is overburdened; he does not possess what we all like so much, the charm and

1. *Die Seele des Schwerverziehbaren Schulkindes*, Ch. 14 (München, 1929).

freshness of youth.'¹ Such children, believing that all doors are closed to them, are in the position of the illegitimate child. They feel themselves unwanted, even hated, and may react with extreme bitterness and asociality. 'Often criminals are strikingly ugly men; men with degenerative signs and repellent facial characteristics. Or sometimes they are crippled men, whose crippled state is not, however, great enough to obstruct their activity. The degenerative signs (sticking out ears, receding forehead, etc.) gave Lombroso support for his theory of inherited criminal tendencies. But to us these signs are evidence of something very different. For we know how from earliest childhood the ugly ducklings have been left out in the cold.'²

The compensation for ugliness is beauty and social feeling. The Ugly Duckling of the fairy story was both ugly and illegitimate – unwanted in every way – and it will be remembered that Andersen paints not only the joy which the swan experiences at finding himself beautiful but also his joy at finding himself admitted to the companionship of his brother swans. In real life the ugly person is often not content until he finds a marriage partner of exceptional beauty. Sometimes he becomes a Don Juan never tired of making conquests to prove that he can be admired in spite of his looks. Or the beauty sought for may be beauty of mind, and the person may aim at becoming an artist, aesthetician, philosopher, or saint. Sometimes we see in the same person the coexistence of possibilities both for good and bad compensations. Pope had much of the spiteful character which can be the weapon of a person who is weak and deformed but at the same time an exquisite aesthetic sensibility. In folk lore, the story of Beauty and the Beast, where the love of Beauty saves the Beast from his evil instincts, symbolizes the alternative answers which the ugly person may give to his situation. But the classical example is that of Socrates, who combined the deepest social feeling

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 208.

2. Unpublished Papers.

with the purest sense of ethical beauty. In those days too there were not lacking hereditarians to tell him that his excessive ugliness must indicate that he was full of evil instincts, and Socrates, knowing the choice he might have made, agreed that those were the difficulties which he had had to overcome.

An important handicap of a non-medical nature is left-handedness, or, as it is more correctly called, left-sidedness. A large percentage of people are born with the tendency to use the left side of the body and the left hand in preference to the right. As our civilization is arranged with a view to the convenience of right-handed persons, this puts the minority at a disadvantage. 'Left-handed children have the impression of being unable to solve problems as well as others. They make efforts to work with the right hand, and when they see that this does not succeed, they imagine that with them things will always go wrong. It is possible to diagnose the left-hander by many signs. Where a child has difficulty in reading, writing, etc., one should consider whether it is not a question of left-handedness. In the majority of cases the left half of the face is better developed than the right.'¹ 'If you ask the child to draw an animal and he draws it moving from right to left, or places his left thumb on top when he clasps his hand, it is presumptive evidence that he is left-handed.'² One of Adler's collaborators, Dr Alice Friedmann, discovered the important fact that the left-handed child has the tendency to spell from right to left. The teacher will often notice the typical manner in which he will transpose the letters of a word, writing 'YUO AER' in place of 'YOU ARE', and stumbling in the same manner over his reading. The compensation of such children is often the development of an especially fine calligraphy, and among artists there are innumerable examples, starting with Michelangelo and Leonardo, who have been left-handed.

1. *Die Seele des Schwererziehbaren Schulkindes*, p. 87.

2. *Pattern of Life*, p. 78.

2. *Environment*

Inferiorities like left-handedness or red hair are more in the nature of social inferiorities, and they form the transition from the study of the child's heredity to a study of his environment. For a child in his earliest years, the environment means, of course, the family. It was Adler's contention that although parents often fondly imagine that all their children receive the same treatment no two children of a family are in fact ever in the same position. He likened the family to a constellation, with the father and the mother as the sun and moon and the children, smaller and larger, brilliant and less brilliant, grouped about them as stars. From the point of view of each of these stars, the constellation as a whole will have a different perspective. The variations of character which each child develops will owe much to his particular perspective. We are able to observe this fact so frequently that we can draw a picture of certain human types, each with a particular direction of compensation based upon that type's original position in the family.

The type of the eldest child is influenced by the fact that for a certain time he was the single star, the sole focus of the parents' attention, and that he has thereafter to reconcile himself to the appearance of others with whom he must learn to share the parents. A certain flavour of bitterness and disillusionment often permeates throughout life the attitude of eldest children who have not succeeded in reconciling themselves entirely to their displacement. In many cases they turn their affection away from the mother whose preoccupation with the newcomer disappoints them and attach themselves to the father. The mother, in Adler's view, is always a child's first choice, whichever sex he may be, and when we hear of a child that is critical of its mother we should look to see if he has not experienced this tragedy of dethronement'.

In our society, the father is generally regarded as the head of the household. He appears to the child to wield the most power because the ultimate decisions are often left to him. His prestige may be invoked if the mother is unable to control the children, he is respected as the breadwinner, and he appears to the child to come and go with a liberty denied to the other members of the family. In fixing his affections upon the father, in taking him as a model, the eldest child therefore tends to become an upholder of established power. He takes his stand as the most responsible child, and if the parents allow him a hand in watching over the younger children, his sense of responsibility will be reinforced in a good direction and can become a compensation to him for the loss of his central position. As he grows up, he will become aware of the special privileges which our society, exploiting his tendency to take responsibility seriously, have in store for him. He may be the principal benefactor from the family inheritance. If the father die young, he steps into his place, becoming the mother's chief adviser and supporter. He therefore comports himself with the knowledge in mind that he is the father's principal successor, and it is possible that his admiration for the father may be mixed with a certain rivalry. The eldest child tends to be the conservative member of the family. 'He likes to take part in the exercise of authority and he exaggerates the importance of rules and laws. Everything should be done by rule and no rule should ever be changed. Power should always be preserved in the hands of those who are entitled to it.'¹ This conservative attitude is further manifested by his tendency to look back towards the past, when he existed without rivals, as a golden age, and to regard the future, which brought him his first disillusionment, with distrust. 'All the movements and expressions of such a child are directed towards the past, the bygone time when he was the centre of attention. For this reason, eldest children generally show, in one way or another, an interest in the past. They

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 147.

like to look back and to speak of the past. They are admirers of the past and pessimistic over the future.¹

The type of the second child is in marked contrast. Having never suffered dethronement, his hopes lie in the future. His longing is for a time when he will be able to catch up and surpass his rival. He speaks of progress, of innovation, of revolution where the eldest speaks of continuity, of preservation, of tradition. For the second child life is a race, with the eldest acting as his 'pacemaker'. Since he cannot generally hope to beat the eldest directly, he will try to find a different method of excelling. If the eldest follows the family tradition, he is likely to become the family rebel. Should his parents live in a commercial environment, he may break away to become an artist. In a family of artists, he might choose to become a soldier. 'Even when he is grown up and outside the family circle he often makes use of a pacemaker; compares himself with someone whom he thinks more advantageously placed and tries to go beyond him.'² Although a revolutionary may, like Karl Marx, have been an eldest born, he will tend, among the circle of revolutionaries in which he moves, to represent the figure of the father, to recreate for himself that position of unopposed kingship which he knew in his earliest years. He may have overthrown the father's world, but his doctrine remains authoritarian. He will be the founder, the law-giver, the prophet. Behind him will rise a second born, a Lenin, who needs a Marx as a pacemaker, who becomes the leader of the Bolsheviki, the minority faction. In the science of psychology itself we have equally good examples. There are psychologists who look upon the world as a place of disappointment and frustration, who consider the movement of the human mind as one of regression towards the lost bliss of the mother's womb, who are critical of women and view the future of civilization with the deepest pessimism. On the other hand, a younger, like Adler, will see the

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 147.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 148.

world as a place of natural inferiority, will see the movement of the mind as a striving towards the future, towards compensation, will take a hopeful view of human progress and care little for deterministic laws and theories of unchangeable instinct.

The last child is another well-defined type. He is the smallest, and, like the person of small stature, his constant desire is to be bigger than all the others, to stand in a heightened perspective, to be the leader and head the procession. If, in the Bible, Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, illustrate the rivalry between eldest and second, the story of Joseph is a marvellous account of the psychology of the last child.¹ Generally the last child is made the pet of ageing parents, is given the coat of many colours. He dreams that the other stars in the family constellation must bow down before his star. He may be so ambitious and combative that he provokes the other children – as Joseph must have done when his brothers decided to cast him in the pit. He sharpens his aggressiveness in conflict with them all, and is often the first to leave the home and to earn his own living. His dream would be realized if, like Joseph, he were to become the saviour of his whole family. In fairy tales he is the Hop o' my Thumb who puts on the seven league boots and outruns all the others, or the Cinderella who, oppressed by the wicked sisters, marries the Prince. Since the youngest child has never known the bitterness of any dethronement, his success, if he makes his life a success, may be of a particularly gracious kind, lacking the authoritarian and bitter attitudes which sometimes characterize the eldest and the rebellious and discontented attitudes to be found in the second born.

The only child makes a fourth type, his characteristics contrasting best with those of the youngest of a large family. While the youngest, brought up to strive with other children,

1. The actual last child, Benjamin, was born so late that Joseph never knew him. His advent did not therefore affect the psychology of the situation.

lives in the world of his contemporaries, the only child is accustomed exclusively to the society of adults, imbibes their talk, is often precocious in his use of language and almost too sage in the opinions which he utters. His strivings are not developed by competition, and the care which the parents were free to lavish on him is apt to make him view the world outside the family as a very unsheltered place. Often the parents themselves take this view. The very fact that he is an only child may be due to some anxiety or timidity in themselves which will reinforce his picture of the world as dangerous. Sometimes, like certain eldest children, he takes the father for a rival and wishes to push him out of the family picture. In his marriage, he will desire to recapture the cosy atmosphere of his former home, and may often prefer to remain childless since he needs his partner's attention exclusively for himself. In work, he probably settles down best in some rather sheltered position such as that of don, civil servant, or minister of religion.

The last type is the neglected child, the orphan or the illegitimate. The child of parents who divorce and remarry may sometimes be included in this category, for he may have the specially bitter dethronement of seeing other children produced by this happier union and feel that he is included in the new family only on sufferance. Often, indeed, it is difficult for his now divorced parents to be interested in him, for he may remind them only of their former quarrels or have traits of character which recall qualities in each other which they had disliked. All such children are in a position similar to that of the ugly child already discussed. In contrast to the only child who, as Adler says, 'is often sweet and affectionate and may in later life develop charming manners in order to appeal to others,'¹ the unwanted is apt to be ruthless and selfish, convinced that he will receive nothing unless he fights or intrigues for it. In *King Lear*, Gloucester's illegitimate son Edmund is a typical picture of such an intriguer. Needless to say, the

proportion among criminals of children who were either illegitimate or neglected is very large.

It is not, of course, the family position in itself but the manner in which the child experiences and evaluates it which decides the nature of his compensation. We have been taking only the average case and have assumed that no special favouritism is shown towards any particular child of a family. Matters are altered if one child is granted special privileges or if one is made the favourite of the father and the other the favourite of the mother. Much also depends upon the relative difference of age between the children. If the eldest is already five or six before the next child is born, the main lines of his character will already have been formed before the dethronement occurs. The second in this case will also find his pacemaker very far ahead of him in the race for life. If the eldest were for some reason unable to compete, if he were crippled or mentally deficient, the normal situation could be reversed, with the younger taking on the responsible characteristics of an elder. Moses is an example of a younger who assumed all the 'lawgiver' characteristics of an elder. 'The situation counts,' says Adler, 'not the mere order of birth. In a large family, a later child is sometimes in the situation of an eldest. Perhaps there were two children born close together, for example, and a long time intervened before a third was born and then two other children followed. The third child may show all the features of an oldest. So, too, with a second child, a typical second child may appear after four or five children have been born. Always where two children grow up close together and separated from the others they will show the characteristics of an oldest and a second child.'¹

Another factor complicating the situation is the question of sex. 'There are exceptions, as we have said, in the types of oldest children. There is one exception which should be mentioned here. It concerns a problem in child life which has hitherto been neglected. This is the tragic role which

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 149.

an older boy plays when he has a younger sister. Descriptions of confused, completely discouraged boys have very often indicated, without the fact itself being mentioned, that the trouble was a younger, clever sister. The frequency with which this occurs is not an accident because there is a natural explanation for it. The girl enters an environment which contains a spoiled older brother who regards her as an annoying intruder and fights against her. This situation spurs the girl on to make extraordinary efforts, and if she does not break down, this stimulation affects her whole life. The girl develops rapidly and frightens the older boy, who suddenly sees the fiction of masculine superiority destroyed. He becomes uncertain, and since Nature has so arranged matters that girls between the ages of fourteen and sixteen develop mentally and physically more rapidly than boys, his uncertainty is likely to end in complete defeat. . . . There is a great number of such first-born boys who are confused, hopeless, inexplicably lazy, or suffering from nervousness for no other reason than that they did not feel strong enough to compete with a younger sister. Such boys are sometimes possessed of an unbelievable hatred of the female sex.¹ One such case comes to mind. The boy, critical already of women because of the sister whose advent had usurped his mother's attention, turned to model himself on the father and to follow his father's profession as an artist. But during the two children's school years the girl competed so well along the same lines that the boy abandoned art altogether and turned homosexual.

The superior valuation which is put upon the male sex in our society embitters the competition between children in more ways than one. If an elder boy feels it as a special disgrace to be beaten by a younger sister, so will an elder sister suffer an especially bitter dethronement if she is followed by a boy. She is the witness of the joy which attends the advent of a son and heir and of the special privileges which are accorded him simply on account of his

1. *Education of Children*, pp. 132-

sex. There are also the situations where one sex or the other is the predominant influence in the family. 'An only boy in a family of girls has a hard time before him. He is in a wholly feminine environment. Most of the day the father is absent. He sees only his mother, his sisters, and the maid-servants. Feeling that he is different he grows up isolated. This is especially true where the womenfolk make a joint attack on him. They think they must all educate him or they want to prove to him that he has no reason to be conceited. There is a good deal of antagonism and rivalry. If he is in the middle he is probably in the worst place of all – attacked from both sides. If he is the oldest, he is in danger of being followed by a girl who is a very keen competitor. If he is the youngest he is made a pet. . . . Such a boy among girls is apt to grow up with feminine tastes and a feminine outlook upon life. On the other hand he may fight strongly against this atmosphere and lay great stress on his masculinity. He will then always be on his guard not to be dominated by women. . . . In a rather similar way, an only girl among boys is apt to develop very feminine or very masculine qualities.'¹ Sometimes in a family where three or four girls have been born, but no boy, we find the last girl developing rather masculine characteristics because she senses her parents' disappointment at their lack of a son.

As the child grows up, other aspects of life begin to come within his purview. He looks outside the family and compares its economic situation and social standing with that of the neighbours. Although the child's direction in life is fairly formed before this occurs, whatever he takes to be an inferiority in his worldly situation will add its weight to his existing experience. If he has felt the neglected child, the comparative poverty of his family may lead him to take an especially bitter view of the world and reinforce his idea that society is the enemy. If he were a second born, poverty may reinforce his rebellious attitude and he may take up the fight for social justice and equality. If he were a

1: *What Life should Mean to You*, pp. 153-4.

dethroned child, some reversal of the family fortunes, a sudden plunge from economic well-being into poverty, may result in a specially pessimistic view of life. An organ inferiority such as a weak stomach may be backed by an experience of poverty to produce an extra sense of deprivation. As well as poverty, there is the influence of any social disgrace which the family may have suffered, such as a bankruptcy, a suicide, or a prison sentence, and there are certain social stigmata, such as to be born a member of a minority population, of a racial mixture, or of a dissenting religious sect. We find that Quakers are often extremely successful in life because they had to make special efforts, and we find among Jews persons of the very highest quality as well as some who have interpreted the prejudice against them as if they were illegitimate and could succeed only at society's expense. In all these cases, the parents' evaluation of their situation becomes an important example to the child. If the parents continually harp upon their social disabilities, if they treat some family disgrace as a hushed and awful secret, the child will be likely to form a pessimistic view of the world.

Inferiorities are never to be considered merely as handicaps, but as the stimulus to compensation, as pointers towards the goal of individual and racial improvement. Inferiority is a state natural to human beings, since every child is born small and weak. As Dr Béran Wolfe has pointed out, a sense of inferiority is biologically rooted in the unequal development of the human body and mind. 'The young of other species also go through a period of helplessness and dependence upon their parents, but as their physical powers grow, a parallel development of their mental capabilities occurs. A kitten that is capable of recognizing a mouse can stalk it, catch it and eat it. But in the human infant there is a gross disproportion between the perceptual faculties and the motor capabilities. The baby can recognize the fact that it is dependent upon its mother for food, warmth, and protection. It knows that its mother

is capable of many necessary activities which lie beyond its powers. A father appears as a huge and relatively omnipotent giant. The world about the baby moves according to ineluctable laws. Darkness and light, food and hunger, speech, locomotion, are vassals of the strange adults who move so surely and knowingly through the baby's cosmos. But the young child realizes his relative weakness. The human baby is the only living animal that experiences his own inadequacy because his mind develops faster than his body.'¹

'The basis of educability lies in the striving of the child to compensate his weaknesses. A thousand talents and capabilities arise from the stimulus of inadequacy.'² Particular inferiorities add their weight to his general sense of weakness. The speech defect, the degrading skin disease, the presence of the brilliant elder brother, the misfortune in the family, strengthen and specialize his striving. His ideal begins to take form as he envisages a situation in which he will not suffer from his particular defects and difficulties. He who cannot walk will desire to swoop and to soar as master of an aeroplane. He who is the smallest and controls nobody will be the policeman who controls all the traffic. He whose mother is so dominating will be captain of a battleship. His goal is set always further as his knowledge of the world increases. Thus, through inferiorities, is produced that variety of careers and accomplishments by which society is enriched.

3. *The Psyche*

Heredity and environment are the twin pillars of every psychology. We cannot explain the human being without reference both to what he brought with him into the world and to what he thereafter experienced. For a large number

1. Dr. Béran Wolfe: Introduction to Adler's *The Pattern of Life*, p. 15.

2. *Understanding Human Nature*, p. 35.

of psychologists, indeed, these two factors cover the whole subject. They differ among themselves only in the emphasis which they lay upon one factor or the other. At one extreme stand those who believe that the individual is moulded almost completely by his environment, and that what he brings with him into the world are only a few reflexes of little importance. At the other extreme stand those who believe the individual to be a mass of drives and instincts, that these more or less condition his future before he is born, and that the nature of the environment does not fundamentally alter this state of affairs. 'A criminal,' says the environmentalist, 'is made so by the nature of his surroundings.' 'A criminal,' says the hereditarian, 'is born that way.' But however sharply these two schools differ, they share one belief in common. Both are determinists. Both believe that the criminal becomes what he is from some cause or other.

Adler's psychology pays equal attention to both heredity and environment. But it makes neither factor into a cause which inescapably determines a person's behaviour. The inheritance of physical traits is an indisputable fact and the laws which govern the transmission of such characteristics are established. But it is a long step from this to postulate the inheritance of psychic characteristics. One can see an organ inferiority; one could watch its development in the embryo. But nobody has seen a 'propensity to anger', a 'sadistic urge', or a 'collective idea'. It is an all too popular fallacy to say that if a child tells lies it is because his maternal grandfather was convicted as a confidence trickster, that if he is insolent it comes from the haughty temperament of an aunt, that if he is bad at arithmetic this is only to be expected because his mother also has no head for figures. 'So far as psychic phenomena and character traits are concerned', says Adler, 'heredity plays a relatively unimportant role. There are no points of contact with reality which might support a theory of inherited acquired traits. Investigate any particular phenomenon in a person's

psychic life, and you arrive at his first day, and it would seem, indeed, as though everything were inherited. The reason that there are character traits which are common for a whole family, or a nation, or a race lies simply in the fact that one individual acquires them from another by imitation or by the process of identifying himself with the other's activity. . . . A child is not born lazy, but is lazy because laziness seems to him the best adapted means of making life easier. . . . A second individual who is involved in a long-standing war with his environment because of his undisciplined striving for power will develop whatever forms of expression are adequate to his battle, such as ambition, envy, mistrust, and the like. . . . The thirst for knowledge which is expressed sometimes as a desire to see can lead to curiosity as a characteristic trait in such children as have difficulty with their optic apparatus, but there is no *necessity* for the development of this character trait. If the behaviour pattern of the child should demand it, the same thirst for knowledge might develop into quite another character trait. The same child might satisfy himself by investigating all things, and taking them apart, and breaking them to pieces. Or such a child might, under other circumstances, become a bookworm.'¹ 'It is interesting to read in Einhardt's biography of Charlemagne that this great Emperor could learn neither reading nor writing for sheer lack of talent for such things! Now, with the development of educational method, no normal child finds these tasks beyond it. From this and many other examples it appears that whenever authors, teachers or parents fail to find a method to correct errors in education, they blame the inherited deficiencies. The superstition which this habit engenders is one of the greatest difficulties encountered in education and in handling problem children, not to mention the treatment of criminals, neurotics and psychotics.'²

1. *Understanding Human Nature*, p. 163.

2. *Problems of Neurosis*, p. 4.

Adler is equally opposed to the view that the experience of the environment in any way determines the behaviour of an individual. The facts of compensation show that difficulties to which one child succumbs become for another the spur to successful achievement, that some children fail in what to the outside observer would seem to be a most favourable environment while others rise to eminence out of the most depressing family *milieux*. The truth is that the environment is not an explanation but part of the problem to be explained. The environment exists, not as an outside fact, but as the child evaluates and interprets it. Anyone who has handled children will at some time or another have been surprised to notice that some fact of apparently great importance has left the child quite unaffected while, on the other hand, some trifling incident has made a deep impression upon his mind. There is no one environment; there are as many environments as there are individuals.

We must therefore ask if there is not some third factor at work over and above those already considered. There is, of course. There is the child himself, whom determinist attempts at explanation leave entirely out of account. The child is alive, and therefore an active element in every situation. He possesses a mind or psyche which does not passively react to stimuli but is an instrument for transforming them. Just as the organs of digestion do not merely receive food from outside but work upon it, transform it, metabolize it and turn it into living tissue, so the organ of the mind arranges, combines, evaluates, re-creates the data afforded it by experience. 'The child,' says Adler, 'in the employment of the influences he has experienced from his own body and from the surrounding world is more or less dependent on his own creative power and upon his ability to divine a path. His interpretation of life – which is at the bottom of his attitude to life and is neither shaped into words nor expressed by ideas – is his own masterpiece.'¹

Heredity and environment are not causes of behaviour,

1. *Social Interest*, p. 146.

but mere data. It is on the development of the psyche and on the manner in which its activity interacts with these data that we must focus our attention if we wish to explain human behaviour. In its origin, the psyche derives from the necessity for movement. 'There is a strict correlation between movement and psychic life. This constitutes the difference between plant and animal. How supernatural it would be to attribute emotions and thoughts to a deeply rooted plant! To hold that a plant could, perhaps, accept pain which it could in no way escape, or that it could have a presentiment of that which it could not later avoid! To attribute reason and free-will to it at the same time that we considered it a foregone conclusion that the plant could not make any use of its will! Under such conditions the will and the reason of the plant would of necessity remain sterile.'¹ The psyche develops because a moving animal must have a direction, must have senses with which to feel its way and a reasoning faculty to envisage a goal towards which it can proceed. 'If we look at the matter more closely, we shall find the following law holding in the development of all psychic happenings: we cannot think, feel, will, or act without the perception of some goal. For all the causalities in the world would not suffice to conquer the chaos of the future nor obviate the planlessness to which we would be bound to fall a victim. All activity would persist in the stage of uncontrolled gropings; the economy visible in our psychic life unattained, we should be unintegrated and in every aspect of our physiognomy, in every personal touch, similar to organisms of the rank of the amoeba.'²

Orientation is therefore the baby's first task. As soon as he is born impressions begin to flood in on him. At first they present themselves as a chaos in which nothing is delimited. Objects have no fixed boundaries, but melt into their backgrounds and into each other. His own toes are foreign

1. *Understanding Human Nature*, p. 17.

2. *Theory and Practice of Individual Psychology*, p. 3.

objects. The face of his mother, as she bends over his cradle, floats before him unconnected as yet with an idea of a body with which it may be connected, differentiated from other things chiefly by the fact that it moves while they remain still. One may often notice the wide, intent stare which a baby directs upon a new moving object that comes within his field of vision and one can realize the effort he is making to map his world. Until he has attained to some orientation his movements must necessarily be made purely at random and whatever capacities he may have brought with him into the world cannot be used with effect.

The baby cannot lie passive until his understanding becomes perfect and his judgement ripe. He must act at once, by trial and error, learning consequences gradually, building up from the experiences he receives a more and more definite idea of the world in which he lives. 'Towards the end of the nursing period, when the child acquires the ability to carry out independent purposeful actions which are not merely directed towards the gratification of appetite, when he takes his place in the family and begins to adapt himself to his environment, he already possesses abilities, psychic gestures and preparations. Besides this, his conduct has acquired a certain uniformity and he is seen to be on the road to acquiring his place in the world. Such a uniformity of conduct can only be comprehended on the assumption that the child has discovered a fixed point outside his personality towards which he strives with his developmental energies. The child must therefore have constructed for himself a guiding principle, a guiding model, obviously in the hope of thus orientating himself in the best possible manner to the environment. . . . The child has found a meaning in life towards which he strives and whose still indistinct outlines he is forming, and starting from which he derives that quality of prevision which is calculated to direct and give worth to his actions and impulses.'¹

From this time forth, the psyche plays an active role in every experience. In all further movements and actions the baby will tend to follow the line set by his guiding principle. Should his first trial and error experiences have taught him that there is danger at a certain point, he will avoid this point; should his efforts have met with success in one direction, he will tend to explore further in the same direction. In all this, he is acting with a set purpose guided by a definite conception of the nature of his surroundings. The surroundings, in their turn, tend to confirm whatever conception he has formed of them, for the simple reason that objects and people respond more or less to the way in which he handles them. Those objects which he approaches with nervousness are likely to get the better of him and to increase his original nervousness on their account. Those which he manipulates with a certain confidence are likely to yield to his manipulations and thus his confidence grows. Even if the environment should at some points offer him a contradiction, he will tend to minimize in his own mind the importance of this contradiction and to accentuate those facts which confirm his original point of view. It was his uncertainty before the chaos of his world which stimulated his search for an orientation, and to admit now that his orientation is mistaken would be to plunge himself back into this uncertainty. In thus clinging to his first idea the child is behaving no differently from the adult whom we often see brushing aside a point that contradicts his opinions and dwelling triumphantly upon whatever confirms them.

The psyche is therefore highly selective. It exaggerates some impressions, it ignores others. It does not passively reflect experience, but works to produce out of experience some coherent picture. Its task is to build what Adler called a 'scheme of apperception', or, if we like, a ready made scheme of reference into which every new experience can be fitted. When a novel fact or a novel idea is presented to the mind it is at once compared with some other fact or

idea which has already found its place in the scheme. The novel fact or idea is dealt with 'as if' it were the other or 'as if' it were not the other. In more complicated judgements we compare it both to what it is like and to what it is not like, but always we establish it in some sort of relationship to the already known, always we assimilate it into our scheme of reference. Only when we have succeeded in thus establishing its place in our scheme do we have the sensation of having understood it, and the feeling of disquiet or uncertainty which anything unknown or incomprehensible produces in us is set to rest. We have now set a value upon it, we have decided whether it is important or unimportant, and what we are going to do about it.

Each person, of course, compares the novel fact to a slightly different body of experience. His scheme of apperception has been differently constructed from that of his neighbour. The evaluation which he makes of the novel fact will therefore also be different. Thus it comes about that what stirs one person leaves another quite unmoved, that what one person dismisses as negligible another regards as significant, that where one person observes certain aspects of a situation, another surprises us by his entirely different account of the same situation. The infinite diversity of human beings is guaranteed by the infinite diversity of their interpretations of life. Each individual is unique. Even if the hereditary and environmental experiences of two children could be imagined as identical – and we have seen already that this is never the case – there would still be no likelihood that they would draw the same conclusion from their identical situation. The slightest difference in their handling of their situation would result in slightly different consequences, this difference in consequences would bring different interpretations, and it would not be long before we saw a wide divergence between their two styles of behaviour.

It was Adler's experience that the child is out of the stage of uncontrolled gropings, has achieved that co-ordination

of his powers necessary for economy of action, before the age of five. His interpretation of the world has been formed, and he acts as if he knew his direction and goal. 'It is in the first four or five years of life that the individual is establishing the unity of his mind and constructing the relations between mind and body. He is taking his hereditary material and the impressions he receives from the environment and is adapting them to his pursuit of superiority. By the end of the fifth year his personality has crystallized. The meaning he gives to life, the goal he pursues, his style of approach, and his emotional disposition are all fixed. They can be changed later, but they can only be changed if he becomes free from the mistake involved in his childhood crystallization.'¹

From this time forward the individual remains always a unity. However much the personality may afterwards be elaborated, it will retain the pattern fixed by the child's original interpretation of life and the scheme of apperception built upon it. The child has said to himself in the beginning, 'It is as if I were not looked after by my mother,' or 'It is as if I could not walk as well as my brother,' or 'It is as if I were too small and must make my presence felt.' Such thoughts belong to the period of life before the child had the use of words and concepts and they are never overtly formulated. They are not 'thoughts' in the sense which we ordinarily give to the term, but the child simply behaves 'as if' this were his view of the matter. If we look at a person's actions in later life, his approaches to problems or the nature of his compensations, we shall become aware that he is still behaving 'as if' he assumed that his mother had neglected him, 'as if' he must go faster because of his brother, or 'as if' he must make himself conspicuous before everybody. 'Struggling within the incalculable compass of his potentialities, the child, by means of trial and error, receives a training and follows a broadly defined path towards a goal of perfection that appears to offer him fulfil-

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 34.

ment. Whether he struggles actively or remains passive, whether he rules or serves, whether he is sociable or egotistical, brave or cowardly, whatever be the variations in rhythm or temperament, whether he is easily moved or apathetic, the child makes his decision for the whole of his life and develops his law of movement in harmony, as he supposes, with his environment. He conceives of this environment and reacts to it in his manner. The course towards the goal differs in every individual, varying in countless details.¹

In his study of the question of perception, Adler is brought face to face with one of the main problems of philosophy, that of Appearance and Reality. From time immemorial philosophers have been asking themselves, 'What can we know?' 'How far is human perception capable of apprehending the truth of things?' 'How greatly is objectivity falsified by our senses?' The answer which Adler gives is in the tradition of the neo-Kantian school. The existence of a reality external to ourselves and to which we must adapt ourselves is never for a moment denied. But this reality is too vast and too complicated to be grasped as a whole and adaptation to it can be only approximate. The vastness of reality forces each of us from the cradle onward to select its seemingly most important elements and to construct therewith our own picture. In science and philosophy we see the same thing. In his attempts to assess reality, the scientist is obliged to construct a theoretical scheme, which he perhaps knows to be abstract and purely of his own devising, but which provides him with his points of reference. The hypotheses of science are like the scaffolding before a building. Or we could liken them to the parallel and meridional lines which the geographer draws upon the face of the globe, lines which are artificial but which provide him with his orientation. We cannot proceed in science without such devices, which Vaihinger called 'useful fictions', nor in life without the aid of what Kant

1. *Social Interest*, p. 75.

called *a priori* judgements. The necessity is summed up by Nietzsche when he writes, 'We are fundamentally inclined to maintain that the falsest opinions (to which the synthetic judgements *a priori* belong) are the most indispensable to us, that without the recognition of logical fictions, without a comparison of reality with the purely *imagined* world of the absolute and the immutable, without a constant counterfeiting of the world by means of numbers, man could not live – that the renunciation of false opinions would be a renunciation of life, a negation of life.'¹

It is for this reason that Adler in his writings would often refer to the individual's picture of reality as his 'guiding fiction'. 'The scheme of which the child avails himself,' he writes, 'is common to and in accordance with the tendency of the human understanding to reduce that which is chaotic, fluid and intangible in life to measurable entities by means of the assumption of fictions.'² The individual does not know the Absolute Truth. He adapts, not to reality, but to the picture he has formed of reality. He goes through life acting 'as if' his guiding fiction were the reality, and what he experiences of life, all that he thinks, feels, observes or does, is limited by his fundamental presuppositions. 'One is here reminded of the apt expression of Charcot who has emphasized for science that "one only discovers that which one knows"', an observation which when directed to practical experience tends to show that our whole sphere of perception is limited by a number of predetermined psychical mechanisms and predispositions, as Kant's theory of *a priori* forms of perception teaches us.'³

'Human beings,' said Adler, 'live in the realm of meanings. We experience reality through the meaning we give to it; not as itself, but as something interpreted.'⁴ The transforming, creative power of the human psyche is so

1. *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 8 (Coll. Works).

2. *Neurotic Constitution*, p. 18.

3. *Op. cit.*, p. 28.

4. *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 3.

great that it must be considered to play the predominant role in the shaping of our destinies. It brings us the possibility of transcending circumstances where animals possessed of a lesser psychic development merely react to them. But it also exposes us to an opposite possibility – that of committing errors in adaptation which would be outside the scope of less developed animals. A certain harmony of our fiction with the true nature of reality is normally guaranteed by the fact that it arose out of a trial and error response to experience, but there are cases where the fiction can become so out of harmony with the truth that, as in the case of suicides, murderers, or the insane, it can be a threat to its holder's survival. Neurosis is a lesser error of this kind, due to the person's mistaken picture of life. 'A person's behaviour springs from his idea. . . . The spoiled child shows entirely the same anxiety whether he is afraid of burglars as soon as his mother leaves the room or whether there really are burglars in the house. In either case he keeps to his opinion that he cannot exist without his mother, even when the supposition that has aroused his anxiety proves to be wrong. The man who suffers from agoraphobia and avoids the street because he feels and believes that the ground is swaying beneath his feet could not behave in any other way if, during his periods of health, the ground beneath his feet were actually swaying. The burglar who shuns useful work because he mistakenly finds burgling easier owing to his being unprepared for co-operation, can show the same disinclination for work when it would really be harder than housebreaking. A suicide finds death preferable to life, which he assumes to be hopeless; he would act in the same way if his life were really hopeless. . . . All these act at times according to a belief which, if it were correct, would make their behaviour objectively right. . . . Thus we reach the conclusion that everyone possesses an 'idea' about himself and the problems of life – a life pattern, a law of movement – that keeps fast hold of him without his understanding it, without his being able to

give an account of it. This law of movement arises within the narrow compass of childhood.¹

A person's law of movement is manifested in what Adler called his 'style of life'. 'If we look at a pine tree growing in the valley, we will notice that it grows differently from one on top of a mountain. It is the same kind of tree, but it has two different styles of life. . . . The style of life of a tree is the individuality of the tree expressing itself and moulding itself in an environment.'² In nature we find that no two trees are alike, and when we come to consider the human being we can be certain that each person has not only a different face but a different psychic physiognomy. Each person expresses himself in a purely individual fashion. What he observes and what he fails to observe, what he feels and what leaves him unmoved, how he interprets events and how he reacts towards them, his whole approach to problems and all those traits of character which we observe in him and which in fact constitute his approach, including his posture before the world, his slightest gestures, mannerisms and intonations, are all uniquely his own and are expressions of his style of life. It is, as we have pointed out, logically impossible to imagine a person who, after the first years of life, continued to act at random, with the various aspects of his personality lacking a point of coherence. Except under care, as a mental deficient, such a person would not survive. The personality is always a unity, whether awake or dreaming, whether in its conscious or in its unconscious aspects. Contradictions which we notice in the character are contradictions only so long as we have not grasped the style of life, so long as we have not understood the aim which informs the whole. If we see a child who whines and complains one moment and the next is full of charm and cajolery, this is only a contradiction so long as we have not learned that his aim is to be given a stick of chocolate. Once we know his aim, we realize that

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, pp. 26-7.

2. *The Science of Living*, p. 98.

what we took to be a contradiction in his behaviour or in his character was only a question of different tactics. So it is in all more complicated cases. Adler chose the name Individual Psychology for his science in order to emphasize the cardinal fact that each person is unique and entire and that we can only understand him if we approach him as such, striving to correlate his various movements until they present to our minds the picture of a consistent pattern. The only way of understanding an individual is to understand him *entirely*.

It is occasionally useful to divide people into types. Individual Psychology itself makes use of this method. We have already noticed the characters typical of certain family situations, such as the eldest or the youngest child present, and we have noticed also that people may be divided into types according to the predominant use which they make of one or other of their sense organs. We might go further, and divide people according to the manner in which they approach their problems, whether they face them directly, whether they hesitate before them, whether they seek a way round, or whether they avoid them as far as possible altogether. We can see that some persons meet life in a more active, extraverted manner, others shrink back in an introverted manner. In classifying people into types, it must never be forgotten that the classification is of our own invention. It is one of those scientific aids, of which we have already spoken, for charting the confused waters of reality. The danger inherent in the method is that it abstracts from the individual under consideration certain among his many characteristics in order to compare them to characteristics abstracted in an equally arbitrary fashion from other individuals. The method accentuates likenesses and overlooks differences, thus in every case presenting a distorted picture of the individual. We may end by seeing him, not as he is, but as our scheme would have him be. 'Are two introverted persons ever the same?' asks Adler. 'Is it conceivable that the lives of two identical twins – who,

by the way, very frequently wish and strive to be identical – can ever take a uniform course here beneath the changing moon? We can employ the idea of types, indeed we must employ it, just as we do the conception of probability, only we should never forget, even when we are dealing with similarities, the differences invariably shown by each separate person.’¹ ‘The classification of types can be a source of confusion if we do not realize that types are merely convenient abstractions.’²

The problem of psychological analysis, as it appears from the point of view of Individual Psychology, is the problem of resolving all the apparent contradictions, of finding the underlying harmony. ‘Let us summarize our position,’ says Adler. ‘In the first four or five years of life the child unifies its mental strivings and establishes its root relationships between its mind and its body. A fixed style of life is adopted, with a corresponding emotional and physical habitus. . . . Since the mind is a unity, and the same style of life runs through all its expressions, all of an individual’s emotions and thoughts must be consonant with his style of life. . . . Here Individual Psychology gives us a special hint for our educational and therapeutic outlook. We must never treat a symptom as a single expression, we must discover the mistake made in the whole style of life, in the way the mind has interpreted its experiences, in the meaning it has given to life, and in the actions with which it has answered the impressions received from the body and from the environment. This is the real task of psychology. It is not properly to be called psychology if we stick pins in a child and see how far it jumps, or tickle it and see how loud it laughs. These enterprises, so common among modern psychologists, may in fact tell us something of an individual’s psychology, but only in so far as they give evidence of a fixed and particular style of life. Styles of life are the proper subject-matter of psychology and the material for investigation, and schools which take any other subject-matter are

1. *Social Interest*, p. 148.

2. *Science of Living*, p. 103.

occupied, in the main part, with physiology or biology. This holds true of those who investigate stimuli and reactions; those who attempt to trace the effect of a trauma or shock experience; and those who examine inherited abilities and see how they unfold themselves. In Individual Psychology, however, we are considering the psyche itself, the unified mind; we are examining the meaning which individuals give to the world and to themselves, their goals, the direction of their strivings, and the approaches they make to the problems of life.¹

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, pp. 47-8.

CHAPTER 3 : Problems of Adaptation

1. *Pampering and Neglect*

‘For a long time now,’ writes Adler, ‘I have been convinced that all the questions of life can be subordinated to the three major problems – the problems of communal life, of work, and of love. As can be easily seen, these are no casual questions, but confront us continually, compelling and challenging us, without allowing us any way of escape.’¹

These three problems might be compared with what other psychologists have called the three principal instincts, of the Herd, of Nutrition, and of Sex. For Adler, however, they do not emanate as instincts from within but are problems set us by the logic of our outward situation, ‘problems with which our existence on earth confronts us. They arise from the inseparable bond that of necessity links men together for association, for the provision of livelihood and for the care of offspring.’² Man ‘must always answer these problems because they are always questioning him,’ nor can he fully solve one without solving the others. Unless a man forms a proper bond with society, it will hardly be possible for him to earn a livelihood, while for a successful solution of the sexual question an occupation will always be necessary. ‘These three problems are never found apart; they all throw crosslights on one another; a solution of one helps towards a solution of the others; and indeed we can say that they are all aspects of the same situation and the same problem – the necessity for a human being to preserve

1. *Social Interest*, p. 42.

2. *What Life should Mean to You*, pp. 7-8.

life and to further life in the environment in which he finds himself.'¹

'It is in his response to these three problems that every individual human being unfailingly reveals his own deep sense of the meaning of life. Suppose, for example, we consider a man whose love-life is incomplete, who makes no efforts in his profession, who has few friends and who finds contact with his fellows painful. From the limits and restrictions of his life we may conclude that he feels *being alive* as a difficult and dangerous thing, offering few opportunities and many defeats. His narrow field of action is to be construed as a judgement, "Life means – to preserve myself against hurt, to stockade myself in, to escape untouched." Suppose, on the other hand, we consider a man whose love-life is an intimate and many-sided co-operation, whose work results in useful achievements, whose friends are many and whose contacts with his fellows are wide and fruitful. Of such a man we may conclude that he feels life as a creative task offering many opportunities and no irrevocable defeats. His courage in meeting all the problems of life is to be construed as a judgement, "Life means – to be interested in my fellow-men, to be part of the whole, to contribute my share to the welfare of mankind".'² 'We acquire a plastic impression of the human soul when we know how an individual stands towards society, how he expresses his fellowship with mankind, how he makes his existence fruitful and vital.'³ 'And whoever can make friends with society, can pursue a useful occupation with faith and courage, and can adjust his sexual life in accordance with good social feeling, is immune from neurotic infection. But when an individual fails to square himself with one or more of these three inexorable demands of life, beware of feelings of abasement, beware of the consequent neurosis.'⁴

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 241.

2. *Op. cit.*, pp. 7–8.

3. *Understanding Human Nature*, p. 100.

4. *Problems of Neurosis*, p. 20.

‘All other questions have for their object the solution of these three main problems. The subsidiary questions may be concerned with friendship, comradeship, interest in state and country, in the race and in humanity; with good breeding, with the acceptance of the civilized functions of organs; with preparation for co-operation in sport, at school, and in teaching; with the respect and esteem that are due to the other sex: with the physical and mental training required to meet all these problems, as well as with the choice of a partner of the other sex. This preparation, whether it is right or wrong, starts from the first day of the child’s life with the mother, who, through the evolutionary development of mother-love, is by nature the partner best suited to give the child experience of living with his fellow beings.’¹

As long as a child is training himself towards socially useful forms of compensation for his weaknesses, he is fitting himself to cope with the demands of life and he is on the road to correct adaptation. ‘The efforts and training of the first four or five years of life are decisive for the child’s main sphere of action in adult life.’² ‘It is by means of his organs that an individual comes into touch with his environment and receives impressions from it. We can see, therefore, from the way he is training his body, the kind of impression he is prepared to receive from his environment and the use he is trying to make of his experience.’³ The child is working continually. Daily he is becoming stronger, mastering the use of his limbs, acquiring dexterity in handling objects, learning first to crawl, then to stand, then to walk. Each point successfully reached is for him an achievement which brings with it the courage to make a further advance. His expanding mental world thus proceeds at the same rate as the development of his other capacities, and his goal of compensation marches an even pace or two ahead of him.

1. *Social Interest*, p. 45.

2. *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 242.

3. *Op. cit.*, pp. 34-5.

The child who trains finds appeasement for his natural sense of inferiority in the process of growing up.

But suppose that the child does not undertake this incessant training and so does not fully reach the achievements which bring him the courage to continue. In this case the sense of inferiority will remain uncompensated. Just as success heightens assurance and prepares the ground for fresh advances, so failure will deepen the inferiority and lessen the chances of compensating in the future. The child's mental development continues to expand, but his practical achievements do not keep pace with it. At each point his goal outstrips by a little more his actual attainments and begins to recede into the distance. Between him and this goal stretches an ever broader gulf filled by his feeling of helplessness.

Adler distinguished three types of children in whom this failure in adaptive training may occur, those with defective organs, those who are pampered, and those who are neglected. 'First, we must take children with imperfect organs, suffering from diseases or inferiorities during their infancy. . . . A body which is ill-suited to the environment and has difficulty in fulfilling the demands of the environment will usually be felt by the mind as a burden. For this reason children who have suffered from imperfect organs meet with greater hindrances than usual for their mental development. It is harder for their minds to influence, move and govern their bodies towards a position of superiority. A greater effort of mind is needed and mental concentration must be higher than with others if they are to secure the same object.'¹ 'Unless there is someone near them who can draw their attention away from themselves and interest them in others, they are likely to occupy themselves mainly with their own sensations. Later on they may become discouraged by comparing themselves with those around them, and it may even happen, in our present civilization, that their feelings of inferiority are stressed by the pity,

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, pp. 34-5.

ridicule or avoidance of their fellows. These are all circumstances in which they may turn in upon themselves, lose hope of playing a useful part in our common life, and consider themselves personally humiliated by the world.¹

‘The second type of situation which often provides an occasion for a mistake in the meaning given to life is the situation of the pampered child. He is granted prominence without working to deserve it, and he will generally come to feel this prominence as a birthright. In consequence, when he comes into circumstances where he is not the centre of attention and where other people do not make it their chief aim to consider his feelings, he will be very much at a loss; he will feel that his world has failed him. He has been trained to expect and not to give. He has never learned any other way of facing problems. Others have been so subservient to him that he has lost his independence and does not know that he can do things for himself. His interest was devoted to himself, and he never learned the use and necessity of co-operation. When he has difficulties before him, he has only one method of meeting them – to make demands on other people.’²

‘The third situation in which a mistake can easily be made is the situation of the neglected child. . . . If there were a pure type of neglected or hated or unwanted child, we should probably find that he was just blind to the existence of co-operation; that he was isolated, unable to communicate with others and completely ignorant of everything that would help him to live in association with human beings. But an individual in these circumstances would perish. The fact that a child lived through the period of infancy is proof that he has been given some care and attention. We are therefore never dealing with pure types of neglected children; we are dealing with those who had less than the usual consideration, or who were neglected in some respects, though not in others. In short, we need only say that the neglected child is one who never found a

1. *Op. cit.*, pp. 14-15.

2. *Op. cit.*, pp. 15-17.

trustworthy other person. . . . Such a child has never known what love and co-operation can be; he makes an interpretation of life which does not include these friendly forces. It will be understood that when he faces the problems of life he will over-rate their difficulty and under-rate his own capacity to meet them with the aid and goodwill of others. He has found society cold to him and he will expect it always to be cold. Especially, he will not see that he can *win* affection and esteem by actions which are useful to others. He will thus be suspicious of others and unable to trust himself. There is really no experience which can take the place of disinterested affection. The first task of the mother is to give the child the experience of a trustworthy other person.¹

While the child needs all the support and encouragement which love can bring him, Adler pointed out that it must be a love which does not interfere with his own self-training. Too often, the mother, seeing the child's struggles to manipulate his toys or to turn a door-handle or to manage his buttons steps forward with a wish to spare him. However well intentioned her action may be, its result, if often repeated, is to form in the child a habit of looking for help to her instead of relying upon his own efforts. This may especially be the case should the child be suffering from some organ difficulty which produces a clumsiness greater than usual. Such children must train, as we have seen, harder than others, not less, but it is precisely these children whom the tenderness of the mother is most concerned to spare. 'Another question concerns the relation of the child to illness and the attitude he resolves to take up with regard to it. The behaviour of the parents during illnesses, especially when these seem to be serious, is noticed by the child. Children's diseases like rickets, pneumonia, whooping cough, St Vitus' dance, scarlet fever, sick headaches, etc., during which the child notices the anxiety incautiously shown by the parents can not only make the ailment worse

1. *Op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.

than it really is, but create an unwonted habit of coddling and give the child an immense feeling of importance without any co-operation on his part. They can also lead to a tendency towards being ill and complaining. If the unaccustomed pampering ceases on the recovery of health, the child often becomes refractory, or has a lasting feeling of ill-health, or complains about being tired and about want of appetite, or he coughs continually for no apparent reason. These symptoms are often regarded – in many cases wrongly – as the sequelae of illness. Children such as these are inclined to cling to the memory of their illnesses throughout their whole life.¹

Pampering is not quite the same as spoiling. The pampering, whose dangers Adler was the first to point out, is of a lesser degree and it may start almost from the cradle. It means primarily to do for the child what the child could and should do for himself. Sometimes, the fault may arise, as indicated, through the mother's too injudicious tenderness, especially in the case of weak or ill children. At other times, it may be due to her anxiety for his safety, so that she will never permit him to make independent ventures. Still again, it may be due to her want of patience. In many households, especially among the poorer classes, and where the family is numerous, the mother may be too busy to allow the child to muddle about by himself, to spill or break things and make mistakes. Among the rich there may be nurses who think it part of their duty to spare the child in every particular. Whatever the actual reason, the child finds that as soon as he attempts anything, a stronger person steps in to perform the task for him. Comparing his clumsiness and weakness with the quick and easy manner in which the adult is able to act convinces him all the more of his incapacity. He begins to see that there is another way than that of doing useful things in which his inferiority may be compensated. Instead of seeking to master his functions he may seek to dominate those adults who seem so much

1. *Social Interest*, p. 53.

stronger than himself. By emphasizing his weakness, by demanding always to be helped, he can force them to be his servants. He can become the child of the fairy stories who need only twist the ring upon his finger or rub the magic lamp for giants and genii to leap to his command.

Pampering, therefore, transforms the child's incapacity into something from which he profits. It alters his goal from mastery over things to mastery over people. As long as the pampering is continued, the child may show no outward signs of difficulty, for he obtains in a moment everything that he requires. The parents may therefore continue their course of action without any awareness that they are making an educational mistake. But the time nearly always arrives when the pampering is lessened or withdrawn. It may be that the child, without being actually naughty, increases his demands upon the parents' time and attention until they become intolerable. If he then finds that he does not get the same immediate attention to which he has been accustomed, he will begin to pout and whine, emphasize his weakness, invent further whims which have to be gratified merely for the joy of seeing others busy, until the parents are brought at last to realize that he is being spoiled. Or it may be that the pampering is continued until some situation in the family arises which causes a diminution of it. This often happens when another child is born and the parents are no longer able to give the first their exclusive attention. In certain circumstances the pampering may even continue up to puberty. But at some time or other, it is almost inevitable that the child will lose his over-protected position and be forced to face the world alone and unprepared.

At this point the pampered child turns into a neglected child. Whenever the pampering ceases, the situation, as seen through his eyes, is one of comparative neglect. It is neglect if the parents no longer seem to meet his demands with the same obedience as they were formerly accustomed to show. It is neglect if another child is born and the attention of the parents is diverted. Sooner or later the

pampered child will have the same reason as the neglected to feel that his parents are not trustworthy, and he will begin to show his resentment. If he is then punished for bad behaviour, the neglect will seem the greater. While there are differences between a pampered and a neglected child, it is true to say that both see reason to believe that the world is hostile, both underrate their capacity to win affection in any useful way, and both are discouraged by their failure to train. The neglected type – in so far as it runs true to type – will perhaps show more actively aggressive traits than the pampered type, which has learned to rely upon expressions of inability and weakness to gain its ends.

From this point forward, the behaviour of the pampered child can only continue in a vicious circle. His initial failure to train has left his sense of inferiority uncompensated. Comparison of his lack of achievement with the achievement of other children in the family will begin to frighten him. The more he sees his credit with the parents diminish, and the more he feels himself left behind the other children in the race for life, the greater will be his desire for some form of offsetting superiority. His ambitions grow as his incapacity increases. His goal, which should have marched a little ahead of him, is set farther and farther into the future, in fantasies of power and greatness which are totally impractical and serve only to emphasize by contrast the reality of his present insignificance. Thus the neurotic's goal of superiority is formed, a goal which at first became too distant because the subject lagged behind in his training, then became more distant still by being psychologically heightened to compensate in fantasy for the sense of inferiority.

In this situation, the pampered child or the neurotic can never adopt the one remedy which would help to break the vicious circle – he can never return to the path of useful self-development. Along this line he has already failed and every increase in his sense of inferiority inclines him still further to distrust his powers. He has learned, instead, how

to make use of the weakness itself. This he will exploit more and more in order to shelter behind the protection of the adults from the unmanageable environment, in order also to have the fictitious sense of dominating them. The goal of emphasizing weakness is logically incompatible with the goal of self-training. He must therefore turn aside more and more from the road to adaptation, becoming always more weak, more anxious and timid, and more dominating. His is now a road which, unless or until he himself understands and corrects the mistake he has made, must lead him towards illness as a refuge from the problems set by life.

2. *The Neurotic State of Mind*

We are now in a position to say something about neurosis. Neurosis, in Adler's view, is a style of behaviour which can arise out of an uncompensated feeling of inferiority. The neurotic may, as a child, have been pampered or neglected or suffered from physical disabilities, and we usually find circumstances such as these as contributory factors in the formation of a neurosis. It should be emphasized, however, that these contributory factors are not to be regarded as the 'cause' of the neurosis. Many persons experience similar difficulties in their upbringing who nevertheless make a satisfactory adjustment to life. Many children can be seen to resist vigorously the pampering with which their parents would overwhelm them. More certainly still we can affirm that there is no relationship between the extent of the difficulties which a person encounters and the seriousness of his later maladjustment. We could speak of 'cause' only if an exact relationship of this sort could be established. Pampering could be admitted as a cause if none but pampered people became neurotic and if all normal people had led childhoods free from pampering. But the child is creative. He himself is a factor in every situation, and we are never

in a position to say what attitude he will choose to adopt towards his organic disabilities or towards educational mistakes.

The origin of neurosis therefore lies, not in objective circumstances, but in the person's own subjective evaluation of his circumstances. It springs from his interpretation of life. At some time or other, the neurotic has felt that he was not equal to meeting the demands which life made on him. He has looked at his organ inferiorities, or at his position as a younger or elder or only child, or at his sex, or at the fact that his mother did not allow him to do things for himself, or that she left him to do things alone, or that he came from a poor family, or, on the contrary, that his father was so rich and eminent, and he has interpreted these circumstances to mean that he could never become capable and strong. The many contradictory reasons which may be advanced to account for a maladjustment offer us a warning that these are not to be regarded as real causes. The interpretation is made first, and the person then looks to his circumstances for material to support it. On this material, and not on himself, he puts the blame. If the psychologist were to be deceived upon this point, if he were really to believe that the patient's condition was the inevitable result of his experience, there would be little he could do to help him. In such a case the patient would be quite right to have a neurosis.

Every neurotic has the style of life of a pampered child. Even if all have not been pampered in fact, yet all have come to interpret the world as if they had been. All behave as if they believed themselves to be unequal to the demands of life and must look to others for consolation and protection in the manner of the pampered child. All seek to compensate their feeling of weakness by dominating those upon whom they depend. All have a very tense ambition and belief in their superiority. The neurotic may be regarded as a type, with the proviso applicable to all types that first and foremost he is an individual. 'Every neurotic,' says

Adler, 'has an inferiority complex. No neurotic is distinguished from other neurotics by the fact that he has an inferiority complex and that the others have none. He is distinguished from the others by the kind of situation in which he feels unable to continue on the useful side of life, by the limits he has put to his strivings and activities. It would be no more help to him to be more courageous if we said to him, "You are suffering from an inferiority complex" than it would help someone with a headache if we said, "I tell you what is wrong with you. You have a headache!"'¹

'The neurotic carries his feeling of inferiority constantly with him. He has constantly been drawing comparisons between himself and others, at first perhaps with his father, as the strongest of the family, sometimes with his mother, his brothers and sisters, later with every person with whom he comes in contact. . . . In this way one finds that the neurotic always apperceives after the manner of a contrast.'² With his attention focussed perpetually upon himself and the source of his weakness, all experience will tend to be evaluated from the point of view of whether he is inferior or superior, whether the other person is weak or strong, whether a situation is likely to produce him a triumph or to involve him in a defeat. These antitheses, inferior-superior, weak-strong, defeat-triumph, so much rule his thinking that if, for example, he hears of a friend's success he may be filled with dismay, because he at once sees himself as left behind, while if he hears of a friend's misfortune it may give him secret satisfaction, for it shows that others besides himself can fail. Such attitudes should not, however, be construed as some kind of moral perversity. The neurotic, perhaps, has been throughout his childhood desperately competing with another member of the family; he has felt the other raised and himself put down in the parental favour; he has come to believe that the success of any other person must inevitably mean a defeat for himself; he has

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 49.

2. *The Neurotic Constitution*, pp. 7-9.

never stopped to ask himself whether there is not perhaps room for two in the world.

There is no person, of course, who can frankly admit himself defeated by life. Although the neurotic acts as though he were in part defeated, he acts also as though he were greatly superior to other people. From early childhood onwards, he may have occupied many hours in dreaming of the time when he would forge ahead of all competitors, when his power and his worth would be demonstrated before a marvelling world. Every actual defeat could only be met by the consolation of believing that somehow, in spite of it, he was possessed of an almost magical power. Hence spring those traits of arrogance and self-importance to be noticed in all neurotic persons. The feeling of superiority, unrelated as it is to any actual achievement, may reach heights which Adler described as 'godlike'. 'The loftiest goals are to be found in the most pathological cases – that is, in the psychoses. In cases of schizophrenia, we often find the desire to be Jesus Christ. In manic-depressive cases also, the patient frequently wishes to be the saviour of mankind, whilst in the depressive phase he often complains of being the greatest sinner upon earth. In paranoia, the patient not only strives to be the centre of attention but actually believes that he is that already. Individual Psychology has shown that the goal of superiority can only be fixed at such altitudes when the individual has, by losing all interest in others, also lost interest in his own reason and understanding. Moreover, the height of the goal now confronts the individual with such difficulties that common sense has become useless to him, incapable of solving them. The goal of personal supremacy blocks the approach to reality.'¹

Even in minor cases, where the goal is not exaggerated to the extent here described, the perpetual antithesis between inferiority and superiority will tend to falsify the neurotic's picture of reality. His perception of the world

around him will be narrowed, limited as it is in every direction by the fact that his attention is focussed exclusively upon himself. In social relations, he is thinking always of his prestige rather than of those with whom he comes in contact. Undervaluing himself, he naturally fears that others will overlook him and is always on guard for signs which may serve to confirm his suspicions. Thus he takes offence very easily, and constantly misconstrues the actions of others. This hypersensitiveness has nevertheless its uses to him, can become the means of dominating others, of forcing them to be careful what they say, of making his presence felt. The same fear of being overlooked causes him to be too aggressive, too boastful, too opinionated, or to adopt some form of capriciousness or eccentricity in order to remain the centre of attention. Such behaviour is justified in his own eyes by the belief that he is really superior to others and can indulge himself in ways not permitted to ordinary mortals. But while thus demonstrating his superiority, there is also that other side of him which feels the pampered child's need for reassurance and love. He clings to others, demands constant praise and flattery, and makes demonstrations of his weakness in order to win their sympathy. But this is really a trick, for he still secretly cherishes the conviction that in winning their sympathy, in forcing them to praise and encourage him, in making them do things for him, he is the dominating factor in the situation. 'Tears and complaints – the means which I have called "water power" – can be an extremely capable weapon for disturbing co-operation and reducing others to a condition of slavery. . . . With such people, as with those who suffer from shyness, embarrassment, and feelings of guilt, we shall find the inferiority complex on the surface; they would readily admit their weakness and their inability to look after themselves. What they would hide from view would be their heightened goal of supremacy, their desire to be the first at all costs. A child given to boasting, on the other hand, displays its superiority complex at first view.

If we examined its behaviour rather than its words, we should soon discover the unadmitted feelings of inferiority.¹

Whether a person takes predominantly what Adler called 'the direct line of attack', by means of arrogance, quarrelsomeness, boastfulness, and other such traits, or what he called 'the circuitous approach' through traits like sadness, worry, and tears, or whether he employs both these methods alternately, his relations with other people are likely to be at all points inharmonious. People will appear insufficiently grateful when he sets out to charm and please them, insufficiently sympathetic when he tries to cling to them, intent on humiliating him when he boasts, and hostile when he tyrannizes. His fiction brings him into perpetual conflict with objective fact, and experience has only the effect of confirming his original opinion that the world is hostile and that he is of no account.

It is the same story when he approaches a practical task. While his actions really suggest that he secretly believes himself incapable of meeting it, prestige would not allow him to admit that he could not succeed as well as other people. The task is a challenge to him to prove his superiority and he cannot say 'No' to it. 'His sense of personal worth is so strong that he himself has only fear and trembling when he suspects its existence. He would gladly turn his attention away from it when he ought to put it to the test of reality. It drives him forward.'² Every task thus puts him into an acute state of tension. When he thinks what a triumph it would be should he succeed, he may be filled with enthusiasm to accomplish it, but when he thinks how a failure would confirm his belief in his inferiority, he becomes filled with foreboding. Therefore he often shows the picture of a person who makes an impetuous beginning which is followed by a loss of interest for no ostensible outward reason. He may be full of plans and schemes for making money, for writing a book, for starting a club, for getting

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 54.

2. *Social Interest*, p. 173.

married, but these ideas succeed each other without being brought to fruition. The state of tension in which he approaches every task naturally makes it harder for him to succeed than for a normal person. His interest in himself blocks his interest in the task, so that he cannot get himself properly absorbed in it or suffers a kind of mental impotence to express himself or is overtaken by stage fright. His anti-thetical scheme, which distorts all reality, also prevents him from making a true estimate of the nature of the undertaking which confronts him. His dread of failure will cause him to exaggerate the difficulties, so that he approaches the matter too timidly. But his belief in his godlike superiority may sometimes cause him to underestimate the difficulties, so that he treats the matter too negligently or too rashly or is perpetually taking on more than he can manage.

These are some of the endless consequences which flow from his false picture of life. Reality is always deceiving him. People are not what they seem. Tasks do not respond to his handling of them as he had envisaged. These numerous shocks increase his original uncertainty and fill him with fear of the new. 'Every step forward is envisaged by him as a fall into the abyss, with all its terrors.'¹ His sense of god-likeness, his belief that he could easily succeed if only he cared to try, must be further heightened. The belief that, not himself, but other people are the cause of his failures, must be the more firmly maintained. Thus he comes ever more surely into the grip of his fiction, is entangled in the meshes of his life style. 'We must reject at once,' says Adler, 'all explanations which imply that a person produces his own suffering or that he wants to be ill. Without doubt the person concerned *does* suffer, but he always prefers his sufferings to those greater sufferings he would experience were he to appear defeated in regard to the solution of his problem. He would rather put up with these nervous sufferings than have his worthlessness disclosed. . . . One knows how many people there are who, when they have a

1. *Social Interest*, p. 173.

certain amount of activity at their disposal, would rather do away with themselves than solve their problems.'¹

In the situation in which the person is now placed, there is only one road which he can take. Before every task that seems to challenge his ability, he must find an excuse for not putting himself to the test. He must give to himself and to others the impression that he is quite willing and quite able to perform it, so that his prestige suffers no damage, but at the same time he must find a means of safeguarding himself against the feared defeat. 'The attitude of the neurotic person resolves itself into a "Yes-But",' says Adler.² He cannot say 'No'; he must say 'Yes, I would, but. . . .' whereupon follow the excuses which absolve him from attempting the task. Sometimes he will take the attitude of godlikeness that the task is really beneath him, that he could succeed in it if he chose but prefers to hold himself in reserve for nobler occupations. Sometimes he exploits his tendency to take on more than he can manage and has always so much to do that he can never be expected to finish any one thing. Sometimes he finds his safeguard in exaggerating still further the difficulties which his foreboding nature have already suggested to him, and in exhibiting before everyone the enormous strain under which he is labouring. 'In a certain popular music hall turn, the "strong man" comes on and lifts an enormous weight with care and immense difficulty, and then, during the hearty applause of the audience, a child comes on and gives away the fraud by carrying the dummy weight off with one hand. There are plenty of neurotics who swindle us with such weights and who are adept at the art of appearing overburdened. They could really dance with the load under which they stagger like Atlas bearing the world on his shoulders. Yet it cannot be denied that neurotics feel their burden very keenly.'³

1. *Op. cit.*, pp. 164-5.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 174.

3. *Problems of Neurosis*, p. 91.

'Ask a neurotic what he would do were he cured,' Adler used to say, 'and his answer will generally tell you what his illness is designed to prevent.' In Individual Psychology this is regarded as the central question. The neurosis is always a purposive 'arrangement', although the patient naturally does not 'understand' it as such. It is a means of avoiding all those tests of life which the person fears while still maintaining the prestige of the personality. "If" is usually the leitmotif of the neurotic drama. "If" is the last resort in every neurotic dilemma, and the one sure means of escape. A person says, "If my life were not so full of terrible difficulties, I should be first." His chief occupation in life is to look for difficulties, to find means of increasing them, or at least of increasing his own sense of their gravity. The most ordinary difficulties of life, common to everybody, are carefully collected by him and kept upon exhibition. He does this more to impress himself than others, but naturally other people take his burdens into account and do not expect so much of him. Any success he may have, moreover, is magnified by this heavily advertised handicap, so that it becomes his most useful possession. By it he wins his way to a privileged life, judged by a more lenient standard than others. At the same time he pays the cost of it with his neurosis.¹ Thus we may find, for instance, that a university student will allow himself to get drunk on the eve of his examinations. Should he then fail to pass, this would not be due to his incapacity but merely to his foolishness in getting drunk. Should he succeed in passing, it becomes an extra triumph to have done so in spite of suffering from a thick head. Either way his prestige is safeguarded.

'Neurosis,' said Adler, 'is not the simplest view of life.' Objective fact is continually demonstrating its untenability. The neurotic is therefore driven to seek everywhere for supporting material for his neurosis. His fiction requires him to believe that others have no affection for him, and,

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

if chance does not bring this evidence of itself, he must artificially provoke quarrels or create situations from which he must be rescued as a test of his friends' allegiance. The more he is emotionally dependent on them the more he is likely to wish to test them in this way. Acts of kindness or forbearance on their part will not be taken into consideration, but when, having tried them to the limit, he has provoked them to some act of impatience, he has proved what he wanted to prove, namely that nobody loves him. 'There, you see . . . !' he will say. Was he not justified in always taking precautions, in putting his trust in nobody, in blaming his failures on the ill-will of others, in assuming the posture of a martyr?

It has sometimes been thought that Adler regarded the neurotic as striving for 'success'. This would not be a subtle enough interpretation of his views. It is true that the neurotic has a strong desire to find himself successful. Yet, as we see, he puts difficulties in his own way and creates artificial quarrels. The aim of the neurosis is retreat. 'The neurotic centres his whole interest on the retreat.'¹ Difficulties and failures are necessary to teach him the necessity for retreat. Minor successes are overlooked in the same way as acts of good will from his friends are overlooked. It forms no part of his scheme to believe in the benevolence of others or in his own capacities. Nor would any ordinary type of success do much to compensate his feeling of inferiority, which is so deep that it could only be relieved by the attainment of an impossible, godlike superiority, a goal of all-powerfulness. 'The neurotic from childhood onwards is trained by his law of movement to retreat from tasks that might, he fears, through his failing in them, injure his self-esteem and interfere with his struggle for personal superiority, his struggle to be first - a struggle which is completely divorced from social feeling. His life motto is "All or Nothing" (as a rule very slightly modified).'²

The development of neurosis thus leads to a point where

1. *Social Interest*, p. 173.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 172.

even the most vital questions, such as success and failure, take on an abstract colouring. The success he desires has not much relation to what the normal person considers as achievement, but is thought of in terms of an abstract superiority. Secretly, he knows this goal to be unrealizable; it takes on the character of a daydream, and he gives himself up more and more to living in fantasy. The neurotic is moving all the time in a direction away from the feared reality, and therefore necessarily towards a private abstract world. The scheme of apperception, with its antithetical inferiority-superiority motif, answers more and more positively to Adler's description of it as a 'fiction'. The final end, of course, would be the abandonment of reality altogether in favour of living purely in the fiction, which is what we see in the insane. Only in an asylum is it possible to dream that one is God while at the same time avoiding every test of one's power which life has to offer. But while the insane person has given the definite answer 'No' to all tests, the neurotic nearly always remains conditioned by his 'Yes-But'. He has probably adopted from the beginning this equivocal answer to life. There are important differences, both in structure and in psychogenesis, between neurosis and psychosis.

Unlike psychoses, also, neurosis is only a partial failure in adaptation. The neurotic has usually not failed in all three problems of life, or not to the same extent. Often he can go forward very well in certain directions. It may even be that in those aspects of life wherein he feels himself capable he makes special efforts to excel as a compensation for those in which he feels himself to be deficient. Thus a man may win great renown as a scholar, but be unable to solve the social problem or the problem of love. He may live as a recluse, concentrating his whole energy upon scholastic attainment, and his avoidance of other tests may not weigh too heavily on him. Here, once more, it is as well to remind ourselves that in psychology we are dealing always, not with objective fact, but with subjective evalua-

tions. A person is not a failure because he chooses to disregard one of life's problems; he is a failure only if he experiences himself as a failure. A monk is not a failure because he remains celibate in order to do his spiritual work, nor is an artist necessarily a failure because his art does not solve the question of earning his living. With these and similar exceptions made, however, it still remains true that any *felt* inability to solve one or other of the questions of life throws the personality into disharmony. 'The goal of personal superiority is such that it invariably magnifies one of the three problems of life out of all proportion. We find that a person's ideal of success becomes unnaturally limited to social notoriety, to business success or to sexual conquests. Thus we see the social careerist, fighting and jealous, the business magnate, extending his interest at the expense of others, and the amorous intriguer, the would-be Don Juan. Each disturbs the harmony of his life by thus leaving many necessary demands unsatisfied, and then tries to compensate by still more frantic strivings in his narrowed sphere of action.'¹

We have to look always for the limits which the maladjusted person imposes upon himself. There it is that the neurosis steps in to safeguard the personality from the sense of defeat. A person may be neurotic only in certain respects or before certain situations. But wherever the neurosis is in question, we shall find that there is no trait, no aspect of the personality which cannot be seen to forward the neurotic goal. Even the suffering of the neurotic, real though it undoubtedly is, is converted into its own compensation. He begins to pride himself on his capacity for suffering and comes at last to exaggerate it so that he can say that at least he excels all others in self-torture. The restrictions of which the neurotic so often complains, the ennui to which he is condemned because of his withdrawal from life, the sense of being 'pent up' within his fortress – in a word, his 'frustration' – may also be turned to account. He can tell himself

1. *Problems of Neurosis*, p. 130.

that his urges are so strong, so far exceed those of other people, that they would act as dynamite upon the world. His frustration then becomes an additional reason for remaining frustrated, for not venturing forth, an argument one often sees in compulsives. And even from despising himself the neurotic can obtain a sort of triumph, as we sometimes see in Dostoyevsky's characters or in the melancholic patient who prides himself upon being the greatest sinner on earth.

'Feelings and emotions,' says Adler, 'are developed in the direction and to the degree required for the attainment of a particular goal. . . . If sadness is necessary for the attainment of his goal, an individual is naturally incapable of happiness, for he can only be happy when miserable. But we notice that feelings appear and disappear as required. A person suffering from agoraphobia loses the feeling of anxiety when at home or when he successfully subdues another person to himself.'¹ 'Jealousy is very often employed to establish a relation of superiority. The jealous partner lays down rules for the behaviour of the other, and enforces them with reproaches and in terms of moral reprobation. The person against whom such conduct is directed is thereby degraded from the position of a partner to that of a dishonourable servitor, which gives the jealous one a sense of relative superiority.'² 'The truth is often a terrible weapon of aggression. A patient remembered that she had deceived her husband with another man some twenty-five years before, during all which time this event had played no further part in her life, but all at once she told her husband and accused herself. . . . Who is so simple as to think that it is a case of the majesty of the truth vindicating itself after a quarter of a century!'³ Feelings, character traits, and other such psychic expressions are never to be regarded as innate, but are to be evaluated as devices which are dropped or substituted one for another as occasion warrants. 'What we call a character trait is the appearance of some specific

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 30.2. *Op. cit.*, p. 132.3. *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

mode of expression upon the part of an individual who is attempting to adjust himself to the world in which he lives.”¹

‘Once in Germany,’ said Adler, ‘after I had been lecturing on child-guidance problems, I received a letter from an unknown person. “In my distress,” he wrote, “I wish to seek your advice,” and he concluded his letter by asking me to send my opinion of his case the next day.

‘In the letter, which I shall quote below, he described his sufferings and stressed certain points, particularly his earliest childhood recollections, as I had mentioned the latter in my lecture and had emphasized their great importance from the standpoint of Individual Psychology.

‘Here is the letter:

I suffer terrible anxiety, which causes constriction in my throat, whenever I attempt a new bit of work. I am mentally depressed, and at the same time feel physically weak and ailing. My head is heavy and my one wish is to go to bed and creep between the sheets.

‘We see how easily he is put to flight! He is in the grip of an excessive tension as if he were faced by some huge task, and he behaves like an anxious child who wants to hide himself from the world.

I have a terrible fear of poverty and of being disdained. I am for ever occupied with avoiding these two factors.

‘His over-emphasis on these two factors suggests that in his earliest years he experienced them both. We see his pride and his dependence upon the opinion of other people.

I would very much like to commit suicide if only I were sure that I would not be found out.

‘Here is an example of the neurotic’s Yes-But. “Yes, I would like to, but . . .” Can we not already see the unity of his personality, his life style, the well-defined path that has been fashioned by his inferiority feeling? His guiding

1. *Understanding Human Nature*, p. 161.

fiction directs the course of all his behaviour, his drives, his thoughts, his consciousness and his "unconscious" – which so far is imperceptible. Should we believe that there is a "death-wish" in his unconscious, a death-wish against which his conscious mind clashes? Is this a case of conscious versus unconscious? But the man is alive! His consciousness is always victorious! It is always stronger than his unconscious.

'Let us examine this personality as though it were a totality. Without doubt the patient is discouraged to a certain extent. His depression, his timidity, his death wish – they are all a burden to him. But it is a burden which he has carried for nearly fifty years! He is a successful agriculturalist, of good stature and well nourished. He has overcome himself. He is a victor. But he wants a higher superiority. What could I not have done, his behaviour says, *if only* I had not this heavy burden.

Yes, I have often wished to commit suicide. *But* always I refrained because I feared suffering, feared the contempt of others, feared the possibility of my having to go on living with a serious, self-inflicted injury.

'We can see how secure his life is, backed up with so many weighty counter-arguments against suicide. So he can afford to state with some pride,

I do not fear Death in the slightest. Death, when better alternatives do not exist, strikes me as the simplest solution to my problems in life.

'Death as the means of reaching the simplest solution of problems! Death as an effortless means of escape! Individual Psychology has often used his very words. This is no "drive"!

As far as I can tell, I have always faced up to my problems in life and have never run away from them although my mental and physical weakness have oppressed me most bitterly in regard to them. I have always pressed on despite my never ending difficulties.

'He is the victor! He is victorious over difficulties which he has created himself. In every walk of life he conjures up

a picture of woe, but always knows ingeniously how he can bring himself a feeling of triumph. This is a trick, an artifice which enables him to feel bigger than he really is. His plan of procedure is to go through life with unjustified but calculated sorrow, impressing these afflictions on himself and upon other people. Should he really fail, these burdens would be his alibi.

My family consisted of my father, mother, a step-brother (through my mother's first marriage), my sister, who was four years my senior, and myself.

'We have already discussed the ambitious nature of the youngest son. He wants to be bigger than the others. But he is often made the pet of his parents. By demanding always to be petted, he can remain the centre of attention.

My earliest recollection is of being left alone at home one evening and being very impressed by seeing a begging street singer going up and down our street.

'The memory accords entirely with the adult life style. We note that this was a pampered child who did not like being left alone. Let us also note the deep response which is occasioned in him by the sight of a beggar. In his way of impressing his afflictions upon others, of perpetually asking for sympathy, is he not also a beggar?

Another recollection: my sister and I were playing with a doll, and my sister broke it. I cried terribly.

'Here we see, as in his fear of poverty, how much the patient exaggerated the loss of anything. He expressed his anger in laments. This is a type of patient who often suffers later from melancholia.

Another recollection: my mother tried to leave the house to go to work, but I cried so bitterly that she threw up her position and said she would stay with me.

'On this, and no doubt on a hundred other occasions he was able to discover how strong a weapon depression can be.

If I heard hymns or sad music I screamed and cried piteously. I could not be taken to church because of this crying. When I was asked why I cried I always replied that being at church forced me to think of my dead grandfather, although he had died thirty years before I was born.

‘His aim in life is to force his way into the limelight by inspiring others to feel sorry for him. This he does at church, where no attention is paid him.

When I was taken to Kindergarten I ran away crying and hurried home. I was so upset that a doctor was called in, who forbade my being taken to the Kindergarten again.

‘Pampered children try to eliminate almost every new situation. Here also the child shows that he can grasp the power which lies in displaying weakness, though he does not “understand” his behaviour as such. It is the beggar’s plan of campaign.

As a child my speech was almost incomprehensible and only my mother could understand me.

‘He wants to be related only with his mother. There are cases on record of children who did not speak until six years of age because pampering made it unnecessary for them to learn.

My speech was a source of great amusement to my family and our neighbours, and I was often encouraged to recite little poems. When my audience had laughed themselves sick, I used to pass the hat round for small donations.

‘Again, we find him exploiting a personal weakness for the sake of remaining the centre of attention, and see, as true to type as can be, the beggar’s gesture.

‘Prompted by my lecture, this man delved back into his childhood and discovered a part of the relative whole. He saw how once he had obtained an advantage upon one occasion he sought to repeat his triumph again and again until the method of striving became almost mechanical. He did not understand it as such, for understanding means

always to understand the uniform direction of the whole life style. But we can see from the patient's letter that he had now begun to understand.

'My correspondence with him was not a lengthy one. Treatment was out of the question as he lived far outside the city. I found out definitely that he had been reared in the utmost poverty and had been excessively pampered by his mother. The richer neighbours were more inclined to take pity on him when they saw him with a haggard look and begging eyes.

'I got a second letter from him, whose contents told me how far he had developed his capacity for understanding his own case. He said.

I was certainly the ruling power in our family and, like Joseph in the Bible, outstripped them all by a long chalk. I have always been able to supply them with the means of existence. I can see quite clearly why my melancholy and tears in childhood should have persisted, aimed as they were at a more advantageous life in the family circle, and later applied similarly to my wife and to everyone with whom I came into contact. In fact, I have invariably been the dominating power, no matter what circles I have been in, and this was perhaps inevitable because I have never remained in any circle in which my game wouldn't work. I can see now that also my suicidal intentions were a means of putting myself into a doleful mood and so coercing other people. I always looked to others for support and tried to make them work for me. I can understand also that really I have played the role of beggar throughout my life, a beggar who plays upon the soft-heartedness of others with his weakness, and I can see what Lessing meant when he made the Dervish say "The true beggar is really the one and only true King".¹ So I wasn't annoyed when people laughed at me because of my bad speech, so long as they gave me money and so long as my mother understood me. Now I believe that my life may be directed along more courageous lines. Like you, I am convinced that my genuine successes in life have not been brought about by my technique of begging but by my trained abilities. As I do not know how to thank you enough, I should like to express my gratitude by sending a little surprise. I enclose a newspaper

1. In *Nathan der Weise*.

article which I wrote during the war. The title is "An Organization of Beggars".

'One year later this man came to see me. He had lost all his neurotic symptoms and had developed no new ones.'¹

3. Symptoms and Organ-Fargon

So far, in describing the neurotic state of mind, we have not paid much attention to the question of symptoms. This is in accordance with the attitude of Individual Psychology to concentrate, not upon the symptoms, but on the person behind the symptoms. It is a well-known fact that there are many ways of making a symptom disappear without thereby curing the neurosis. Hypnotism, faith healing, electric shocks can all claim to produce apparently beneficial results, but lasting cures depend upon a reorientation of the life style which needs the symptom as its protection. 'Till the present day,' says Adler, 'the usual method has been to attack the symptom. To this attitude Individual Psychology is entirely opposed, both in medicine and in education. When a child is backward in arithmetic, or has had bad school reports, it is useless to concentrate our attention on these points and try to improve him in these special expressions. Perhaps he wants to bother the teacher; or even to escape from school altogether by getting himself expelled. If we check him at one point, he will find a new way to reach his goal. It is just the same with the adult neurotic. Suppose he suffers, for example, from migraine. These headaches of his can be very useful to him and they may occur at the precise moment when he has the greatest need for them. . . . Why should we expect him to give up such a well tested device? . . . So long as his goal remains the same, if he gives up one symptom he must find another. "Cured" of his headaches, he will develop insomnia or some other

1. Unpublished Papers.

symptom. . . . Neurotics exist who can drop symptoms with astonishing rapidity and take on new ones without a moment's hesitation.'¹

People are often classified into 'normal' and 'neurotic' according to whether or not they exhibit symptoms. This may be helpful from the doctor's point of view, but it should not deceive us into believing that there is any correspondence between the number and extent of the outward manifestations and the severity of the psychological state. The real neurosis lies in the attitude to life, in the state of mind which we have been describing. 'What is customarily known as "disposition to neurosis" is a real neurosis already, the more suitable neurotic symptoms appearing more definitely and as proof of disease when an inward need demands the calling forth of strengthened devices.'² Thus, in a family in which there is a great deal of illness a neurotically disposed child would probably have to produce more serious-looking complaints in order to impress his weakness upon his environment than in a family whose members were always well. Where the symptoms chosen are of a physical nature, we should expect a person of weak constitution to be able to produce them more readily than a person of sound constitution, and this would not signify that the psychological difficulties were greater in the one case than in the other.

Just as the pampered child does not make difficulties so long as the pampering is continued, so also the neurotic does not produce symptoms while he feels himself in a protected or favourable situation. It will be understood, therefore, why the neurosis frequently appears to break out suddenly. A beautiful woman, whom all the world has favoured on account of her looks, may sail through life until, perhaps at the climacteric, she is brought to realize that her importance is diminishing. A man who, without perhaps having been fully aware of the fact, has always

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 63.

2. *Theory and Practice of Individual Psychology*, p. 33.

depended upon the support of his wife, may continue to be well until her death seems to rob him of the whole point and value of his existence. Both these cases reveal what Adler called the 'test situation'. When a person's circumstances change we see tested his real power to co-operate with life. The beautiful woman had perhaps always been accustomed to receive without making any return. When life brings her less she not unnaturally starts to emphasize her need and makes demonstrations which compel others to continue attentive to her. This is the method suggested to her by her training; she has not had the training in co-operating with life which would suggest to her that she can maintain the consideration in which she has been held only by intensifying her social usefulness. So also does the man who falls into neurosis after the death of his wife reveal how narrow were always the limits within which he was prepared to co-operate with life. Perhaps he had been interested only in his wife, not in the generality of human beings. He may even have been interested in his work primarily in relation to her and not for the work itself or for the good it brought to others. The test situation then reveals that his was no full solution either to the problem of society or to the problem of work. Life without her will naturally appear to him meaningless, for apart from her he had no other social interest.

Test situations confront the human being all through life. They begin for the child when attention is first diverted from him. We see when another child is born whether his good behaviour until that moment was only 'conditional'. We see it again when he must go to school, when he must face examinations, when he changes his class and comes under a perhaps less sympathetic teacher. We see it at puberty, when he is confronted for the first time with the three great questions of adult life. We see it thereafter when he loses or changes a job, and in the way he copes with his marital responsibilities. We see how he meets middle age, whether he must have a 'last fling' or is living in the midst

of full achievement. We see, in old age, after he is retired and the children have left the home, how he faces his diminished social importance.

Of all the later problems of adaptation, none are perhaps more difficult than that of the menopause for women and of old age in general, and for this our present social evaluations are in part accountable. 'Our civilization is dominated by a principle in which present performance alone is a source of value. Every ageing individual, but especially a woman who is growing old, experiences difficulties at this time. The damage which is done to an ageing woman by entirely undermining her value affects every human being, in so far as we cannot count our worth solely from day to day in the prime of life. What one has accomplished at the height of his activities should be credited to him during the years when the powers and activity are of necessity lessened. It is not right to exclude someone entirely from the spiritual and material relationships of society simply because he is growing old. In the case of a woman this amounts to a virtual degradation and enslavement. . . . Womanliness is not extinguished with the fiftieth year. The honour and worth of a human being last unaltered beyond this age, and they must be guaranteed.'¹ This neglect of the old has often a disastrous effect also upon the young. 'The grandparents are always in the position of having to prove - what they should not have to prove - that they are still alive and count in the world. In trying to prove this they are always interfering with the education of their grandchildren. They pamper the children terribly, for it is only the children who will take notice of them.'²

The test situation is not the same as what is meant by the shock or trauma. A person does not fall ill of neurosis because he has experienced some psychic shock, such as a railway accident, or some special infantile trauma, as was at one time believed. When a young girl falls ill after having

1. *Understanding Human Nature*, pp. 144-5.

2. *Education of Children*, p. 202.

experienced a sexual assault, the reason lies not in the actual experience but in the fact that her whole previous preparation for the problem of sex was inadequate. She uses this experience to exaggerate the dangers and difficulties of the whole problem, to demonstrate to herself and to others that after so unpleasant an episode she is justified in entirely avoiding this side of life. The test situation should not be confused with any reason that the patient may give for the outbreak of his neurosis. It is not an isolated experience but a persistent failure. Suppose, for instance, that a man can make no headway in his profession. Every time that he loses a job, his inability is confirmed in his own eyes, and he approaches the next job at a greater tension. His inability will loom larger and larger in his mind, overshadowing achievements in other directions, until his whole personality seems to be involved in this one failure. It begins to seem to him as if he were inferior as a human being because he is unable to deal with this aspect of life.

Symptoms develop as a rule from the emotional tension at which the person lives when he experiences himself as thus defeated. One of the functions of the emotions is to prepare the body for some kind of action. When a person is afraid, the heart beat quickens, the abdomen tenses itself and the breath shortens as it does in running. The body is thus put into a state of readiness for flight from the object feared. Similar physical changes occur in moments of anger, when the body is prepared for attack. So long as these physical changes expend themselves in the appropriate movements, the body remains at equilibrium. But if movement is impeded, the body is kept in a strained, unnatural state of tension which is experienced as a physical discomfort. We feel the palpitation of the heart, the visceral sensations, the quick, heavy breathing as if we were running. Sometimes we try to ease these sensations by making some alternative movement. Thus if we are in a high state of excitement or ambition over some project which we are

unable to realize at the moment, we may feel impelled to get up and pace the room. Many symptoms are, in essence, movements of this kind, designed to relieve the psychic tension which has thrown the body into disequilibrium. Since they occur before situations which the person feels unable to overcome directly, they are always movements of a useless kind, like that of an anxious or ambitious person pacing the room. We can understand, therefore, why it is that a symptom often produces in the patient a feeling of temporary physical relief. An hysterical attack is followed by a sense of quiet, a compulsive action relieves the state of anxiety.

Once effects of this kind begin to be produced in the body they enter, like every other trait and attribute, into the service of the person's main striving. They are made use of and exaggerated. The person feels the palpitation of his heart, starts to complain of the feeling, finally, whenever he is faced with a difficulty, or he cannot get his own way, or he feels that others are not paying attention to him, the heart beat quickens. He must lie down, he must be looked after. Symptoms are therefore to be evaluated as movements or gestures expressing the state of mind, of anxiety, ambition, anger, refusal and so on from which they arise and which are thereafter made use of to attain the person's goal. 'Vomiting', says Adler, 'is commonly a sign that the person who vomits does not wish to agree. Fainting may also be an effective rejection of a situation in which a person feels entirely powerless.'¹ 'An attack of hysterical epilepsy often gives the impression of a person in a towering rage.'² The body talks a behavioural language which Adler called the 'organ dialect' or 'organ jargon'. 'The organic functions are dominated by the style of life. This is notably the case with the heart, the stomach, the organs of excretion, and the sexual organs. The disturbance of these functions expresses the direction which an individual is taking to attain his goal. I have called these disturbances the organ dialect

1. *Problems of Neurosis*, p. 63.

2. Unpublished Papers.

or organ jargon, since the organs are revealing in their own expressive language the intention of the individual totality.¹

The conception of organ jargon is an extension of the significance which we all know to exist in posture and gesture. We judge a person's attitude to a problem by his stance before it or by his approach. 'The bodily posture and attitudes always indicate the manner in which an individual approaches his goal. A person who goes straight on shows courage, whereas a person who is anxious and hesitant has a style of life that prohibits direct action and something of a detour appears in every action. We can always detect by the way in which an individual gives his hand whether he has social feeling and likes to be connected with others. A perfectly normal handshake is rather rare. It is usually overdone, underdone or betrays a putting-off or pulling-to tendency. It is noticeable in a tram-car that some people lean sideways; they wish to be supported and are quite oblivious of others' convenience. . . . All these things reveal, more directly than their conversation, the attitudes that individuals assume towards life. The attitudes adopted in sleep are as significant as the postures and movements of daily life. Very little children sleep on their backs with the arms raised, and when we see a child sleeping in this position we may assume that it is healthy. When we see a person sleeping upon the back, stretched out like a soldier at attention, it is a sign that he wishes to appear as great as possible. One who lies curled up like a hedgehog with the sheet drawn over his head, is not likely to be a striving or courageous character but is probably cowardly. A person who sleeps on his stomach betrays stubbornness and negativity. I was considerably puzzled by the discovery that some children sleep in a crouching position, resting on their knees and elbows like animals; but I finally found out that this is the best position in which to hear what is happening in the next room.'² In asylum patients we sometimes see the

1. *Problems of Neurosis*, p. 156.

2. *Op. cit.*, pp. 151-3.

same posture, expressive of the person's attitude to life, maintained with absolute fixity for hours or days at a time.

It is clear that the choice of the gesture or symptom through which a person expresses his difficulties will have its relation to his physical constitution. The organ most likely to break down under the continual strain to which the emotional tension subjects the whole body will be the weakest organ, the one which gave the individual the most difficulties during his childhood. Not everybody can produce an hysterical fit or a neuralgic headache to order, but only those persons who possess the constitutional predisposition. 'The organs most disturbed by this tension are those which have been made susceptible by some inherited weakness. Hence we find, when a whole family is liable to a particular organic weakness, that several members suffer from organic illnesses, and others from neurotic symptoms of the same organ. In such cases we must not overlook the contributory factor of imitation.'¹ In some cases choice of symptom depends, not on any actual breakdown of the organ, but on the psychic experience of its weakness during childhood. Thus a man who ordinarily speaks clearly may be given to stuttering if he becomes angry or upset. In a moment when other means fail him, he resorts to using his speech as he did as a child. Normal life affords many such examples. When a woman, after trying every method of persuading her husband to some course of action, is still unable to get her own way, she bursts into tears. Her last resort is to adopt the means which were effective in moving her parents. The neurotic often re-enacts a 'pantomime' of the childish weaknesses which had brought him special exemptions or privileges.

Where some particular organ weakness or psychic experience of weakness does not influence the choice of symptom, it is those organs which lie nearest to psychic control which are chiefly affected by the state of tension. Neurosis is manifested largely in the vegetative centres, in the respiratory,

circulatory, and digestive systems controlled by the psyche through the endocrine glands. 'A few more observations may be added regarding the symptoms. The organism is a unity and has had freely presented to it by evolution the gift and dowry of a struggle for equilibrium, which is preserved as far as possible under difficult conditions. This equilibrium is maintained by the susceptibility of the pulse to variation, by the depth of the breathing, the number of respirations and the co-operation of the endocrine glands. It becomes more and more evident in this connexion that, in particular, psychical agitations affect the vegetative and the endocrine systems and occasion either an increased or a modified amount of secretion. At the present time we understand best the changes in the thyroid gland due to effects of shock. . . . Advances, too, have been made in a search concerning the irritation of the suprarenal gland. During angry emotions, especially, the secretion of the suprarenal gland is increased. The American investigator, Cannon, has proved by experiments with animals that outbursts of anger cause an increase in the amount of adrenalin. This leads to a quickening of the heart's action and to other changes. Hence it can be understood that headaches, facial pains, perhaps even epileptic attacks, can have a psychical cause.'¹

Neurosis, of course, is not the only type of adaptive failure possible. Adler characterized it as the passive type of failure where the person seeks to dominate by exploiting weakness and illness. 'It may be assumed that a child who shows more than the normal amount of activity of the wrong kind, if he becomes a failure in later life, will never be a nervous subject. His failure will take another form and he will become a criminal, a suicide, or a drunkard.'² Here again, the symptom is secondary. 'Once the goal of superiority has been made concrete, there are no mistakes made in the style of

1. *Social Interest*, pp. 180-1.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 161.

life. The habits and symptoms of an individual are precisely right for attaining his concrete goal; they are beyond all criticism. Every problem child, every neurotic, every drunkard, criminal, and sexual pervert is making the proper movements to achieve what he believes to be the position of superiority. It is impossible to attack his symptoms by themselves; they are exactly the symptoms he ought to have for such a goal.¹

The active failures show a more definitely negative answer to the problems of life. While the neurotic tends to remain within the orbit of his 'Yes-But', suicide, like insanity, answers 'No'. Alcoholics and drug addicts say a less definite 'No' in the temporary forms of oblivion from problems which they seek for themselves. Their vice is their alibi – 'If only I had not this vice, I would be first' – as well as their reproach against those who did not, in their opinion, look after them carefully enough. All these harm themselves in order to reproach others. Suicide is nearly always a violent accusation against others. Sometimes a suicide will leave a note behind rather ostentatiously absolving others from blame, but he knows that he can afford this gesture which will only heap coals of fire on the head of the person whom his death accuses. This motive is well expressed in the note left by a young suicide which read: 'Don't tell Mother what I have done. . . . Tell her to put flowers every day on my grave.'

In films and detective stories, criminals are usually depicted as subtle and daring. It is important to emphasize that this picture of the criminal character is a completely false one that does untold social harm. Society reaps the fruit of permitting this misrepresentation in the existence of those gangs of juvenile delinquents which haunt every large city and whose misbehaviour is largely the result of their excessive vanity. The criminal is invariably a coward. Parents should impress this fact on all children in order to

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 61.

correct the romantic notions about him which they imbibe from modern forms of entertainment.

Let us look, in Adler's usual deep and simple fashion, purely at the criminal's behaviour: 'Where the co-operative man is brave, the criminal is cunning and underhand. The pickpocket exploits the unwariness of his victims. The burglar exploits darkness and is adept at climbing and running; he posts guards. The murderer and the footpad seize upon unarmed and unsuspecting persons. The methodical manner in which he prepares his crime is characteristic, for in this careful planning against unprepared individuals he reveals his own cowardice. If he is discovered and imprisoned, his deep-rooted vanity comes to the surface immediately. He simply argues, "This time I wasn't cunning enough." He gives no credit to the cleverness of his captors. Nearly always he can recall crimes that he committed before the present one, crimes that were not discovered because he had planned them so skilfully. The discovery this time was only due to a little mistake. I remember one man who kept on repeating, "If only I had not forgotten my spectacles the police would never have caught me." In his "If only" lay his sense of personal triumph; he always felt that he was a hero.

'Often the criminal needs to stimulate himself artificially before he can carry out his crime and he must suppress the residue of social feeling which remains in him. This form of self-stimulation is brilliantly described by Dostoyevsky and is an example which I am fond of quoting. For two whole months Raskolnikov lies in bed worrying over whether he should murder an old miser. The argument that his sister must go on the streets to earn bread for the family does not prove a sufficiently strong incentive to urge him on to the deed. But at last Raskolnikov cried out, "Am I Napoleon or a louse?" By means of this highly-pitched contrast he stirs himself up into a state in which he is able to attack the old woman. Nobody can reform a criminal who fails to perceive his ambition and vanity.

'The criminal tendency is visible in childhood, at a time when it is not too late to check its growth. The result of my researches has taught me that children who have not formed a proper bond with their family by the time they are three or four years old and who have been able to develop and preserve an unusual degree of activity are likely to become criminals.'¹ Perhaps they have been left to run in slum streets, where this activity has been developed unrelated to any social aim. But while many have been thus neglected and may, as we have noticed, present in addition ugly physical characteristics, there are also those who have been badly pampered and who are extremely handsome. Indeed, Adler used to rate great good looks as a physical handicap, since such looks could easily lead a person to believe that he was privileged to have everything given him without having to work for it. 'Often healthy children, proud of their physique and charm, take to crime if their beauty, coddled life, and general dependence on others make them highly exigent and conceited. They look upon other people as creatures belonging to some lower order, who exist merely to do servile jobs and to be exploited by their betters. Thus it is small wonder if the traits of the pampered child and the criminal have much in common and that many pampered children become criminals when they grow up.'²

The neurotic always retains the element of social interest in his answer to life, countered though it be by the ego-centric interest expressed in his constant 'But'. The actively negative answer given by the criminal makes it naturally far harder to reach him by any form of appeal. Moreover, a large number of convicts, perhaps 60 per cent, are of low mentality and without any trained skill which would enable them to re-enter society. The criminal's radius of action, even in what concerns crime, is usually very narrow. 'He follows the same path with monotonous regularity, and as a rule follows it always in the same manner. If he is a pick-

1. Unpublished Papers.

2. *Ibid.*

pocket, he remains a pickpocket, if he is a burglar, he remains a burglar.'¹ Those possessed of a higher intelligence and a higher skill, such as the expert burglar or forger, are the easiest to reform, and Adler thought that many of these, if not found out, voluntarily relinquished crime in later life, when they felt their physical agility deserting them, and established themselves in some trade such as that of locksmith or watchmaker.

'We cannot afford to leave the task of understanding and preventing crime to certain institutions alone. Every citizen must do his utmost to play his part.'² It is only through public opinion, which every citizen helps to mould, that more adequate institutions, aimed at the re-education rather than at the punishment of criminals, can be created. Any form of brutality or solitary confinement can do no more than lower the criminal's already exiguous stock of social interest and provide him with fresh grounds for believing in the hostility of society. 'But neither is it enough to treat criminals in a kindly fashion and endeavour to ease the rubs that pain them so much. We must also perform the greater task of developing the convict's mind, of changing him from an ignorant, confused and hopeless human being into a courageous and purposeful one.'³ Pampering of the criminal is to be avoided. We shall discuss in the next chapter 'the masculine protest', which most criminals have in a highly developed degree and which causes them to identify callousness and cruelty with masculine power, and kindness with the despised, feminine side of life. If they find prison life too easy, their reaction may be to regard their captors as 'soft' and 'weak', and they will interpret their good conditions merely as a cynical triumph for themselves. But, beneath this masculine bravado, the criminal has the usual too great dependence upon the opinion of others manifested by persons who suffer from a feeling of inferi-

1. Unpublished Papers.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

ority. He dreads the contempt of his fellow prisoners who would think him 'soft' if he were to show signs of reforming and of co-operating with the authorities. Perhaps a first step would therefore lie in a more careful grading of prisoners, so that those who showed signs of a willingness to co-operate, to work usefully, to earn remissions of sentence by good conduct, could be placed solely with those of a like spirit by whose example their social courage would be reinforced.

Another point that concerns every citizen is the after-care of the convict. 'We know how hard it is for the ex-convict to reform in a world in which he remains suspect. So we must extend and support all appeals to mankind for an improvement of the general attitude towards the ex-convict, for the very frequency of the resumption of old habits is enough to show us that we are not following the right path.'¹ Adler himself had for many years an ex-convict as his gardener, who had come to him through the after-care society. During these years there was only one small relapse in the early stages of their association. 'Adler had sent his burglar friend to buy some raspberry canes and he returned with more canes than the money Adler had given him could account for. Adler saw that this was a situation which could not be overlooked but must be met once and for all, in spite of the difficulties that it presented. Adler was naturally anxious to check this first attempt at dishonesty, and, on the other hand, to do nothing to penalize or injure the new self-respect he was helping the gardener to build up. He therefore praised the plants very highly, saying, 'I see you have made a most excellent selection', but counted them over very carefully at the same time, so that the gardener, who was watching him a little anxiously, should see that he had missed nothing. 'When you take these back to-morrow,' Adler then observed quietly, setting to one side the stolen canes, 'you might say that I had decided to buy ten more. I will give you the money to buy the extra canes

before you take them back.' The gardener carried out Adler's instructions implicitly and without comment, and there was never again the slightest lapse into dishonesty.¹

After Adler's death, this man wrote to Dr Lydia Sicher, 'I have no money and no prospects of work, but I shall always say to myself whatever circumstances I find myself in, "What would Adler have thought you should do about this?" And when I have thought this out I shall do it, so please have no uneasiness.' When, shortly after, the Nazis invaded Austria, the skill this man had formerly developed in outwitting authority found its true social fulfilment, and he worked tirelessly to save Individual Psychologists in danger of political persecution. 'I had always thought him a good fellow,' Dr Sicher commented, 'but I had not expected to find in him a hero.'²

1. Phyllis Bottome, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 175.

CHAPTER 4: Psychology of Love

1. *The Role of the Lover*

'At the end of all my lectures,' says Adler, 'I have to reply to questions about love and marriage, and my questioners often appear to have been misled by some psychological reading into believing that the sexual impulse is the central activity to which every other activity is related. I have never seen the reason for placing this unnatural emphasis upon one single function of life. . . . The erotic phases are functions of the individual life style, and we can only gain insight into the erotic life, with all its waywardness, hesitation and elusive subtleties in so far as we can grasp the individual's style in the prototype. By the prototype I mean the original form of an individual's adaptation to life. The psychic prototype is a finished being by the time the child is four years old. . . . This prototype in each one is the baby Cupid who rules his behaviour as a lover.'¹

Although the individual's sexual expressions are thus not fundamentally different from his other expressions, the sexual question has an importance for psychology which requires us to give its problems special attention. This importance derives from two facts. The first is that, of all the bodily functions, the sexual is the one most responsive to psychic influences. While the functioning of the other organs is more or less automatic and certain, the sexual, dependent so largely upon our mood of the moment, is apt to play us tricks. The second fact is that – as Adler put it – 'Sex is a task for two.' The function requires for its satisfactory performance an equal reciprocity and efficiency

1. *Problems of Neurosis*, pp. 46–7.

in two persons. The physical adjustment depends upon a corresponding mental adjustment, and both partners are brought into the most direct and intimate contact with the demand for co-operation. It is not surprising, therefore, if this very delicate function is subject to many hazards and that sex becomes a problem which frequently brings a patient to the psychiatrist's consulting room.

Perhaps we may be allowed to speculate that it is the very delicacy of sexual responsiveness to the life style which accounts for the prevalence of a notably superstitious attitude towards the whole problem. The uncertainty of the sexual performance causes people to place the function in a category apart. It seems to them as if this function were uncontrollable, and they come to regard it with something of that mixture of fear and awe with which the human being has always regarded the uncontrollable forces of nature. They therefore readily lend their belief to theories of mysterious drives, instincts, ids, and demons by which, if things go wrong, they believe themselves to be 'possessed'. Where human beings have failed to understand their own psychology, they have always believed in 'possession'. That we have indeed a sexual drive or need is obvious, for we are born with sexual organs which require to function. But the point of real significance for psychology is not the possession of a need but the road which each individual takes in order to satisfy it. 'The study of instincts or urges,' said Adler, 'will never enable us to understand the structure of an individual psyche, and it is interesting to note that psychologists who endeavour to explain the mind's working from such observations automatically presuppose a style of life without noticing that they have done so.'

'I will suggest a plan according to which all tendencies in psychology may be classified. There are "possession" psychologies, which are occupied in showing what a human being brings with him into the world and has as his possession. From this inheritance they seek to derive all that is psychological. Seen from the standpoint of common sense,

this is an awkward proposition. In ordinary life people are not inclined in other matters to draw conclusions from anything a person possesses, but from the use he makes of it. If a person possesses a sword, that does not mean that he is making a proper use of it. He can throw it away, he can slash about with it, he can whet it, etc. It is the use to which he puts it that interests us. For that reason I should like to say that there are other schools of psychology that must be regarded as "use" psychologies. Individual Psychology, which in order to understand an individual puts in the forefront his attitude to the problems of life, devotes special attention to use.¹

Placed in a category apart, regarded with superstitious fear and awe, the sexual problem is naturally put out of perspective, and is not seen in its relation and harmony with the other problems of life. 'We need not depreciate the great importance of these organic drives and of the part they play in love, marriage and the procreation of mankind in order to assert that sex is over-emphasized at the present time.'² Books, cinemas, the whole of our public life shows that anxious interest in the subject which recalls the child's anxious interest in matters where he feels himself deficient or uncertain. We are able to notice also how all this anxiety and misunderstanding leads to a very strong ideal of compensation. Social thinking places marked emphasis upon the desirability of perfect sexual adequacy. People are required to show themselves sexually efficient upon pain of losing prestige, with the result that even the most normal person becomes highly sensitive about his erotic life and will fiercely resent any aspersions cast upon his sexual capacity. This has the effect of again heightening the whole problem and creating in people's mind fresh tension and uncertainty. Where prestige is so much involved, failures and achievements will both be overrated, with marked effects on the personality either for good or for ill. A failure

1. *Social Interest*, pp. 186-7.

2. *Science of Living*, p. 252.

in sex may be so deeply felt that the person comes to believe himself defeated as a personality and behaves as if he were of no value in other, quite unconnected spheres of life. Achievement, on the other hand, brings with it a great reinforcement of social courage with which to meet all other demands. The state of being happily in love is one that heightens the whole personality and endows the lover with a vigour and ambition to accomplish tasks which had hitherto seemed impossible.

These reflections lead us to consider as erroneous the point of view which sees society as hostile to sexual activity. The purpose of social morality is not to repress but to guide; it seeks to harness our sexual desires to social ends, to discipline and to civilize them, and thus to ensure that they shall attain their highest qualitative expression. Morality discourages only the misuse of our sex. If the mother does not wish her child to indulge in masturbation, her aim is not to suppress the child's sexual instinct as such, but rather to confirm and strengthen it by discouraging habits which might impair its future full development. If morality regards perverse forms of sex with disapproval, this is because such perversities represent a lingering at an infantile stage and act as a limitation upon full functioning. Whether the mother always adopts the right methods with her child or whether our present morality may not also sometimes choose mistaken means is another question, which need not here concern us. Society does not always take what we would consider the most effective way of dealing with criminals, perverts, or maladjusted individuals. But the purpose by which it is governed is not any the less clear. If its morality contains prohibitions against infantile or limiting forms of sex, it contains also strong compulsions towards the most complete and desirable form, that of love and marriage. Social opinion does not give full value to bachelors and spinsters and exercises the very strong demand which we have already noticed that all persons should lead an adequate sexual life.

We have to try to situate the problem of sex correctly if we are to form a balanced attitude towards it. Its importance can not only be over-estimated, but also under-estimated. The puritan who regards sex as limited, in the way it is with animals, to the biological function of reproduction, overlooks the many psychological values which it possesses for the human being. Sex goes beyond reproduction, and there is meaning in the fact that for us it is a continuous and not a periodical activity. The opposite of the puritan, the pleasure-seeker, who also thinks of sex as a mere biological drive to be satisfied, is hardly more advanced in his understanding of its psychological values and uses. To Adler, life was always precious, a never-ending miracle which could not be taken for granted. It was with a sense of gratefulness that he accepted the body 'as a gift from the hand of Evolution', and it was with admiration that he studied as a doctor the marvellous complexity of its functioning. His attitude towards sex contained an element of reverence for this function by means of which homage is paid to each other and to the body and by means of which the miracle of life is perpetuated. If his ideas were far removed from those of the puritan, they were equally far removed from those of the pleasure seeker. His sense of the high importance of sex caused him to dislike any attitude which seemed to minimize its value or to turn it into a bagatelle.

There is a corollary between pleasure and disappointment. The pleasure-seeker is nearly always a pessimist, because, his approach being wrong, the pleasure does not come up to his expectations. Sex does not bring real fulfilment if approached as an egocentric pleasure for one rather than as a co-operative union of two. Its real purposes are sidetracked by regarding it as an animal instinct which must simply expend itself and reach pleasure as the reward. The more civilized the human being grows, the more subsidiary becomes the question of instinct, and the higher the psychical satisfactions which he demands of sex. 'Sex is a drive or instinct; but the question of love and marriage

is not simply a question of how we are to satisfy this drive. Wherever we look, we find that our drives are developed, cultivated, refined. . . . We have learned how to dress ourselves and how to be clean. Even our hunger does not have a merely natural outlet; we have cultivated our tastes and our manners in eating. Our drives have all been adapted to our common purpose and culture; they all reflect the efforts we have learned to make for the welfare of mankind and for our life in association.¹

The refinement of sex is thus the work of civilization, which has created love out of the simple animal instinct. Psychologists, occupied for the most part with biological and functional mechanisms, have paid almost no attention to the truly psychological side of the question. There is badly needed a proper analysis of what constitutes love, of the basis upon which it arises, and of the functions it serves. We can make a beginning if we look once more at the prototype. It is in its relationship with the parents that the child learned the meaning of love. What it received from the parents was protection against insecurity and the consolation of feeling itself cherished in spite of its weakness. Counterbalancing this need for protection, it had a desire to grow up and to be equal to the parents. If we look now at the lover, we shall find that this double relationship is still maintained. The lover desires to have someone to trust and to depend upon. At the same time he wishes to reconstitute the whole family situation, with himself in the parents' superior position; he wishes the person he loves to lean on his strength. Love is therefore a balance between the urge to receive protection as if one were a child and the urge to give it as if one were the parents. The fact of being cherished is a proof of one's value and the exercise of protection over another is a confirmation of one's strength. A woman wishes to depend upon her lover, but at the same time she likes to care for his needs. A man likes to have a woman to protect, but he is ready also to receive her care

and her consolation. The love relationship is a mixture of strength and tenderness. In both ways it heightens the lover's value. From a truly successful love-experience the human being is able to turn back to the other problems of life with a great reinforcement of his social courage.

It is evident, then, that love must be of the utmost value to society. Indeed, we find that poets and novelists are never tired of asserting this value, of exploring its possibilities, of carrying further its stylization. We have their constant activity to thank that the ideal is kept before us and that in each generation it remains responsive to changing social circumstances. No doubt the origins of our present conceptions of love are lost in the mist which shrouds the beginning of our civilization, but in what has come down to us through the poets of stories like that of Lancelot and the Holy Grail we see that it was bound up with mystical religion. In Provence, Courts of Love were set up, wherein the lords and ladies of the time sought to establish its etiquettes. The chivalric ideal of love echoes still in the songs of the Troubadours, while in Dante we have in its fullest perfection the mystical-medieval ideal. In the Renaissance, the ideal became more humanistic in accordance with the social circumstances of the times. The eighteenth century also produced its special set of etiquettes, which the romantic, libertarian nineteenth century largely reversed. Thus we see that love is not a spontaneous creation, but has been carefully fashioned by man on the basis of the original instinct.

In former ages, love was used as a spur to drive each partner on to high deeds and noble actions. To-day it still exacts a certain standard of discipline and achievement and thus helps to maintain social morale. Although this is no longer a martial and aristocratic civilization, in which the chivalric ideal of hero and *princesse lointaine* could flourish, man and woman still has each a definite love-role to play towards one another and it is only in the acceptance by each of his role that the problem of love can be successfully

solved. Man need not aspire to be a hero, but he must still show himself brave and independent if he is to deserve woman's respect. Woman need not be a princess, but she still likes to be courted and to have homage paid to her. She has her reciprocal role to play. She must take trouble with her dress, her looks, and her behaviour if she is to deserve man's admiration. He will expect her to care for his comfort, not merely for the sake of the comfort itself but as a tribute to his importance, a return for the admiration which he gives her. There is an element of 'as if' in these two roles, just as in every form of behaviour. All through life we are playing roles of one kind or another, whether the role we choose be that of the neurotic or the independent man, and we are always engaged in making the truths by which we live.

The two roles are equal and complementary. They require an absolute mutuality of giving and taking, and the concentration of the interest of each upon the qualities of the other. 'Each partner must be more interested in the other than in himself. This is the only basis on which love and marriage can be successful.'¹ It is clear that a person like the neurotic, whose interest is differently focussed, will be in a difficult position when faced with this demand. He will always try to treat sex as a pleasure for one rather than as a co-operative union of two. Nor can he agree to the basic equality which the love-relationship requires. We have seen how the neurotic's general sense of weakness causes him to desire an exaggerated amount of praise, love, and consolation from others. However much he is given of these attentions he can never be satisfied. We have seen, on the other hand, how he must always be the first. He will therefore tend to over-emphasize both aspects of the love relationship. Although it is legitimate to expect tenderness from the partner, the neurotic's desire for pampering and his displays of weakness in order to secure it will undermine the partner's respect for him. His compensatory need to

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 266.

show his superiority will cause him to appear, not strong, but domineering and tyrannical, and these traits will set the partner in antagonism to him. The partner will always be in the position of his servant, forced either to minister to his weakness or to bow to his absolute will. When he must give something in his turn, he will feel it as a deduction from his own personality. It is therefore logically impossible to establish a permanent love-relationship upon the basis of inferiority and superiority.

A certain confusion in our social ideas must be held partly accountable for the fact that the equality demanded by the nature of the love-relationship is so often not attained. The social position of the two sexes is by no means equal. As a result of the division of labour, the work of woman has been chiefly confined to the affairs of the house and to the care of her children, thus releasing man for the task of bread-winning. In the pursuit of his breadwinning activities, man has naturally had to create regulations, systems of contract, laws and customary etiquettes by which these activities should be governed. Accordingly, it has come about that the outward forms of the civilization have been largely the creation of the male and reflect his pursuits and his interests. 'Our civilization is not only a right-handed but a masculine one.'¹ Just as door-knobs, calligraphy, and other such things have all been arranged for the convenience of the right-handed person, so do all the laws and conventions of society show signs of having been arranged for the convenience of the male. Man has undoubtedly used the accidental advantage which his role in the division of labour afforded him to make himself the dominating partner in the sexual relationship. Until this century, woman has been rigidly excluded from taking any share in deciding the larger social questions and even in her home she has been put under the legal and financial authority of her husband. Once these purely external social arrangements came to be interpreted as if they betokened a real difference in the

worth of the two sexes or in the value of their respective contributions, conflict was bound to arise in the love relationship. 'The fallacy of the inferiority of woman, and its corollary, the superiority of man, constantly disturbs the harmony of the sexes. As a result, an unusual tension is introduced into all erotic relationships, thereby threatening, and often entirely annihilating, every chance of happiness between the sexes. Our whole life is poisoned, distorted and corroded by this tension.'¹

It may seem strange, perhaps, that the approach to greater sexual equality during the last half century has done little to lessen this tension. We can hardly boast that men and women are happier together to-day than in the past, or that modern marriages are more successful. But this is explainable if we hold fast to the psychological point of view. Outward circumstances are never in themselves the 'cause' of anything. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – to go no farther back – woman was under the authority of her parents and could be disposed of in marriage without regard to her own inclination. In the nineteenth century she was given freedom of choice in regard to her husband, but once married she was tied to her choice by the bonds of a far stricter morality. In this century, this morality has been relaxed, she has been accorded control over her own property, the professions have been opened to her, and she may take her share in politics. Had any of the legal and social disabilities under which she formerly laboured been a 'cause' of discontent, the sexual relationship would have become intolerable long before the present day and marriage as an institution would have foundered. But so long as the inferiority of woman was accepted by both sexes as in the natural order of things, it gave rise to no special tension. It is the subjective evaluation of this inferiority as an injustice which opens the door to discontent. The same may be said of the class structure. As long

1. *Understanding Human Nature*, p. 145.

as wealth and poverty, a ruling and a serving class, are accepted by all as a normal social arrangement, antagonisms do not arise. To-day, the change in our ideas of what is just makes the slightest departure from equal treatment either of the sexes or of classes or of persons seem more indefensible than did the wholesale restrictions of former times. The approach to formal equality means an accentuation rather than a diminution of sexual competitiveness.

2. *Masculine Protest*

It is against this social background, with its mixture of co-operation and competitiveness, that the modern child develops. The importance attributed to sex early impresses him. The mystery with which the subject is often surrounded awakens his curiosity, may arouse his forebodings and exaggerate his expectations. The fact that he is not sexually competent, that the function is one that belongs to the privileges of being grown up, contributes to his sense of inferiority and heightens his striving. To attain puberty and sexual potency means to arrive at equality with the parents. His idea of what constitutes power will be linked with his idea of what constitutes potency. His ideas of power and potency will then be linked with the idea of masculinity, for it is the father whom he sees as being generally the most powerful person. 'It is usually the father who stands as the family symbol of power. His mysterious comings and goings arouse the interest of the child much more than the constant presence of the mother. The child quickly recognizes the prominent role his father plays, and notes how he sets the pace, makes all arrangements, and appears everywhere as the leader. He sees how all along he commands and how his mother asks him for his advice. . . . There are children for whom the father is so much the standard that they believe everything he says must be holy; they attest to the

rightness of their own views simply by saying that their father once said so.'¹

In the same way the child is often led to believe that boys are more valuable than girls and are entitled to special privileges and special education. As he grows up, the child will find that our cultural heritage gives prominence to the performances of men while women play little or no historical role, and, from the first story of the temptation, are even shown in a disadvantageous light. He will find also that the virtues and vices are allotted genders. Courage, independence, truthfulness belong as of right to the heritage of the boy, and he will probably be admonished by the phrase 'only girls cry'. Those traits of character which are most unpopular, such as weakness, suggestibility, nervousness, trickiness, capriciousness, jealousy are the portion allotted to the girl.

The psychic characteristics attributed to man and woman are traditional and are not conditioned by any biological differences. 'Certain character traits count as masculine, others as feminine, albeit there is no basis to justify these valuations. If we compare the psychic state of boys and girls and seemingly find evidence in support of this classification, we do not deal with natural phenomena but are describing the expressions of individuals who have been directed into a specific channel, whose style of life and behaviour pattern have been narrowed down by specific conceptions of power. These conceptions of power have indicated to them with compelling force the place where they must seek to develop. There is no justification for the differentiation of "manly" and "womanly" character traits.'²

What is true of character traits is true also of capacities and talents. 'In the comparison of results of intelligence and talent tests, it was actually found that for particular subjects, as, for instance, mathematics, boys showed more talent, whereas girls showed more talent for other subjects,

1. *Understanding Human Nature*, p. 124.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 127.

such as languages. Boys actually do show greater talent than girls for studies which are capable of preparing them for their masculine occupations, but this is only a seemingly greater talent. If we investigate the situation of the girls more closely we learn that the story of the lesser capability of women is a palpable fable. A girl is daily subjected to the argument that girls are less capable than boys and are suitable only for unessential activities. It is not surprising then that a girl is firmly convinced of the unchangeable and bitter fate of a woman, and sooner or later, because of her lack of training in childhood, actually believes in her own incapability. . . . If we approach a human being, undermine his self-respect so far as his relationship to society is concerned, cause him to abandon all hope of accomplishing anything, ruin his courage, and then find that he actually never amounts to anything, then we dare not maintain that we were right, for we must admit that it is we who have caused all his sorrow!¹

Parenthetically, it is worth noting that 'talent' is one of those general terms which obscure rather than clarify meaning. Nobody supposes that persons born blind are equipped by nature with some mysterious talent for tuning pianos, because the connexion between the loss of sight and the frequent development of attention to auditory impressions is only too obvious. But when it comes to more complicated forms of talent, we are at a loss to account for the manner in which they have been acquired and are easily led to suppose that they must be inborn. Thus we may say of a mediocre artist that he unfortunately seems to possess no talent for painting. What precisely do we mean? Perhaps his failing consists of a want of dexterity with his pencil or brush, in which case we are referring to his insufficient manual training. Or it may consist in an insensitivity to form and colour relations, in which case we are referring to his insufficient visual training. Or the meaning which he seeks to convey may be rather ordinary and unin-

teresting, which again implies that he probably has not looked carefully enough at his subject to penetrate to its hitherto unperceived aspects. Or his technique may be borrowed, which may mean that he has not given enough intellectual thought to the development of his art. Or we may criticize his work as too free and slapdash, or too formal and lacking in spontaneity, or for other mistakes of a like nature. Such aesthetic criticisms are also ethical criticisms; we are judging his work by certain behavioural standards. Mistakes that he may make along these lines are due to the limitations of his character training. His work is an expression of himself, of an attitude which he takes up towards society, and expressions of a like nature will always be found in his personality as well as in his painting. A painter who is slapdash will show himself impatient in other respects, too ambitious to reach a quick result, too easily satisfied with a low standard. A painter who lacks spontaneity may be one who shows himself inclined to hold himself back from life, or who is too anxious to achieve a single, absolute form of perfection. A 'talent' for painting thus resolves itself into a question of many special trainings, trainings of the hand, of the eye, of the intelligence, of the character, in one or more or all of which we may feel the artist to be deficient.

The different psychic characteristics and capacities observable in the two sexes derive in part from differences in their physique, in part from the role which each must play in the division of labour, in part from the traditions of the environing culture. Man's physique assigns him tasks which require strength and continuous application. His role of ordering the external arrangements which are to govern society requires him to develop more talent for logical thinking. Social tradition expects him to show qualities like fortitude and courage. Perceiving the high estimation in which masculine attributes are held, the boy will be constantly striving towards a goal of superiority in which they shall be included. He asks himself whether his activities are

sufficiently masculine, and if he becomes anxious upon this score he will begin to over-emphasize this masculinity, to adopt manners which are boastful, arrogant, defiant, and callous, while he will try to avoid showing signs of pity, tenderness, or submission, since these are regarded as feminine characteristics. This over-emphasis on strength, based on uncertainty of not living up to the manly role demanded by society, is what Adler called the 'masculine protest'.

We can see how easily the concepts masculine and feminine, as they are held by our society, come to accord with the neurotic antitheses between superior and inferior, strong and weak. The neurotic would like always to be superior and masculine. He would prefer to confront society in an active and aggressive manner, and many neurotics who are possessed of a certain activity do in fact confront society predominantly in this way. Particularly the most active type of all, the criminals, show a ruthlessness which, because they take it to be masculine, they consider as a virtue. If criminals seldom show signs of remorse, it is because remorse would be a weak or feminine characteristic which must be extirpated from their character. But the general type of neurotic, possessed of less activity than the criminal, is seldom able to maintain so wholly masculine a front. He has from the first learned to rely upon his weakness in order to gain the attention and help of others. He is bound by his law of movement to use feminine tricks in order to dominate. He must gain his ends by charm, by coquetry, by capriciousness, by demonstrations of inability. But he bitterly resents in himself these imitations of the feminine which he is forced to assume, and will live on their account in a state of masculine protest against his own character. He will try wherever possible to spring back to the masculine line, and will at all times seek to revenge himself on others for the humiliations to which he feels himself compelled. As in all the other affairs of life, so in regard to sex he takes a hesitating, ambiguous line, wavering

in what Adler called a 'state of hermaphroditic uncertainty' between masculine and feminine forms of behaviour.

Those men who feel capable of upholding the more direct and active masculine protest become the Don Juans, the sexual adventurers, the deceivers of woman. Their conquests bring them the affirmation of their virility which they had begun to doubt, but, as with all neurotics, proof can never be sufficient, and they must be constantly testing their powers by new conquests. In any sexual relationships they must always keep the initiative, and if the woman shows too strongly that she returns their love they may get 'bored' with her attentions because they feel as though the initiative were passing out of their hands. Thus they show how they cannot enter into an equal relationship but must always be first. Their unfaithfulness, while demonstrating their powerful 'instincts' and keeping the woman in her place, has also the merit of avoiding the real responsibilities of a man. They are able to excuse themselves, without losing prestige, for not exercising the care and dependability which the woman has the right to expect of them. Some men deliberately get into scrapes from which the woman must rescue them, or take to vices of which they have to be cured. Thus they secure all the pampering which they want, while their scrapes or their vices remain evidence of their masculinity. Others gain pampering and freedom from responsibility by calling the feminine qualities which they are forced to display their artistic temperament. We see the masculine protest in all sorts of odd little ways, in men who make the whole house untidy or who cannot thread a needle or boil an egg. They are asking to be looked after as their mothers looked after them while demonstrating at the same time that any feminine accomplishment is beneath them. Some men are ostentatiously careless of their dress, for fear they may be accused of having a feminine type of vanity, and also to get the woman to nag them and to pay attention to them. Acts such as failing to return home at the right time for meals or returning with a number of

unexpected guests show in this lack of consideration the desire to depreciate the woman's part in affairs. Sometimes we notice that a father is afraid that his son will suspect that he is not masculine enough. When he speaks to his son he will address him in an over-hearty manner or talk to him boastfully about women or encourage him, as he grows up, to have sexual experiences. All this is done, less to help the son's adjustment to life, than to convince him that his father is a 'gay dog'. The masculine protest reveals itself almost invariably in clubs, barracks, 'stag parties', or wherever men find themselves without the presence of the other sex. The conversation will show the anxious regard of each not to seem less manly than the others and not to show any trait of character or manner of behaviour which might be construed as feminine. All these little signs will convince any observer how pitifully insecure is the male claim to superiority.

Women will maintain a striving which is just as tense to equal or surpass the man. 'It would seem,' said Adler, 'that in our culture every woman wanted to be a man. We find those girls who have an unaccountable desire to distinguish themselves in games and activities which are more appropriate to boys by virtue of their different physique. They climb up every tree, play rather with boys than with girls, and avoid every womanly activity as a shameful thing.'¹ 'This is the type which seeks to compensate for the evil of the masculine attitude with a "masculine" response. The defence attitude towards womanhood is the foundation of her whole being. She has been designated the "boy-girl", "*la garçonne*", the "mannish" woman and the like. . . . There are many people who believe that there is a congenital factor present in such girls, a certain masculine substructure, or secretion which causes their masculine attitude. . . . If this revolt exhibits itself in the direction which we call "masculine" the reason for it is simply that there are only two sex roles possible. One must orient one-

1. *Understanding Human Nature*, p. 129.

self according to one of two models, either that of an ideal woman or according to that of an ideal man. Desertion from the role of womanhood can therefore appear only as "masculine" and vice versa. This does not occur as the result of some mysterious secretion, but because in the given time and place there is no other possibility.¹

Another type of woman may agree to assume part of the feminine role, while seeking to avoid the part which seems to her chiefly inferior. She may thus concentrate upon the role of wife and mother to the detriment of her love-relationship. Sometimes we find that she has no use for a man after he has given her children. She turns her interest entirely away from him or demonstrates very clearly that she regards him as no more than a source of the income which allows her to bring up her family. Such a woman argues that if she cannot equal man in the outside world, she is at least determined that the home shall be purely her empire. She may be insistent upon the perfection of her arrangements, which no one must disturb, and upon the cleanliness of her house, which no one must sully. She may so monopolize the children as to place the husband on the level of a visiting stranger, and her pride in her house will be exaggerated to a degree which ensures that he will find himself uncomfortable in it.

The very opposite is the woman who might be described as being of the courtesan type. Here, in place of any kind of active protest against male superiority, we see 'the masculine protest by feminine means.' Such a woman adopts wholeheartedly all those traits of weakness, coquetry, vanity, capriciousness, suggestibility, anxiety, jealousy, and so on with which our social tradition is ready to credit her. She will appear to agree with the superiority of the man and will express herself as hostile to the aspirations of her own sex, towards whom she will have few friendly feelings. 'Such a one,' said Adler, 'is fully convinced of the inferiority of woman just as she is convinced that man alone is

1. *Op. cit.*, pp. 134-5.

called upon to do all the worthwhile things in life. As a consequence she approves his privileged position. But by way of revenge, she will shift her marital responsibilities upon her husband with a lighthearted catchword to the effect that "only a man could do these things".¹ She will set herself out to charm, please, and seduce the man, and will load his every achievement with praises and flattery. But while making herself thus indispensable to his vanity, she may not be without a secret feeling of mockery for the susceptibility which he shows for her deceits. She knows his every weakness and how best to play upon it, how to put him in a rage, and how to wheedle him out of it, how to flatter his manliness by assuming jealousy of other women, how to appeal to his superiority by crying until she is given a present. The processes of logic will be beyond her, for 'only men know how to reason', and by means of this inability she of course wins every argument. She will use lies and deceit and laugh at her husband's priggishness were he to disapprove. She may be extravagant with his money and occupy the time when he should be working with her trivial commissions. Or she may be anxious as a child if she is left alone, so that he must be constantly running back to provide her with reassurance. In all these ways, while admitting his marvellous sense of responsibility, she will seek to test his endurance to the utmost in the hope that at last she will be able to prove him fallible.

Whether man is faced with the mop of the militant housewife or with the whims of the courtesan, he always finds himself challenged, and is always seeking ways of escape – to his work, to his club, or to new sexual adventures. In Victorian times, the male had all the authority which a stringent morality backed by financial control of his wife's affairs could give him, and he was able to play an almost theatrically pompous role. To-day, formal sexual equality has been largely attained, but the tradition of male responsibility and leadership remains. Man has to maintain the

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 136.

fiction of his superiority without any of the real power and authority possessed by his forefathers. The burden upon him therefore becomes continually more unbearable. Making use of the fiction that he is the leader, the woman can load him with every responsibility which she does not wish to take herself. But if he were to exercise any authoritative leadership, she would, in the name of her equal rights, refuse to follow. Ours is a time when neither sex clearly knows the role which it is required to play. The confusion is well exemplified in the case of courting couples. Some women, who are perhaps earning their own living, will express their desire to share equally with the man even in the matter of expenses, which may cause offence to the type of man who wishes to exercise his prerogative to protect. Other men, feeling that in the circumstances of to-day this kind of chivalry is out of date, may expect women to share things equally, and may cause offence to the type of woman who likes to receive the tributes due to her femininity. So it is in all the greater questions of marital adjustment, especially in those cases where a woman's career has to be reconciled with the claims of her husband and family and home. We live in a world in which old, traditional ideas are still in conflict with new social arrangements.

As far as the battle of the sexes goes, the position now seems to have been reversed, the advantage being on the side of women while men are everywhere on the defensive. But from the emotional point of view, woman's gains have not brought her a corresponding satisfaction. The woman still requires to admire the man to whom she gives herself, but man has no longer the authority to be a leader in the old-fashioned manner which she would often like. Woman to-day is often dissatisfied simply because man is unable to show more authority. It would sometimes be a comfort to her if she could hear a decisive word which would renew her sense of his assurance and stability, even though she might indignantly oppose this word as soon as it was

uttered. The more discontented she shows herself with his 'weakness', the less of a hero does he suppose himself to be. He tries to lead her through persuasion and kindness, and while she may be bound to agree that he is indeed very kind, such kindness may only irritate her further by making him appear even less of a leader than before. Women too often desire at one and the same time liberty and authority, which are incompatible. The truth is that the idea of male superiority is too deeply engrained in the psychology of the woman as well as of the man. Sexual equality can only work if not only man were to relinquish his former pretensions but if woman were to relinquish some of her expectations. It is a fallacy to imagine that formal equality between the sexes can be a solution to the problem. If it is to be a solution it requires an inner change, a readjustment of age-old psychological habits. Less must be required of the man and more of the woman, until the burden is absolutely equal. Competition is, by definition, a striving for inequality. In sexual matters, or in society at large, equality is only a solution when practised in conjunction with co-operation.

3. Neurotic Disorders of Sex

A person's sexual approach is determined in his childhood. It is influenced by the example he sees before him in his parents, and by the evaluations he has made of his family position and his bodily weaknesses. Children react to a situation as a whole, seldom merely to one aspect of it which may be deliberately presented to them, and it is not easy to mislead them as to the nature of their surroundings. Broadly speaking, the children of any generation will reflect in their behaviour the problems with which their parents have to struggle. The degree of bitterness between the sexes can be measured in the nursery, in the race between boys and girls for first place. In the same way,

the strength of the competitive spirit as it prevails in society at large finds its expression in the race between eldest and younger children. It is hardly less marked to-day, even in households where all the children are treated as theoretically equal, than in times gone by when primogeniture gave each child a formal and recognized place in the family hierarchy. Equality, as we saw in the last paragraph, is no solution as long as it remains contradicted by competition.

Friction between the parents will naturally teach the child the dangerous and disagreeable aspects of the love relationship. The marked dominance of one parent may find its reflection in the child's estimation of his own sexual role. Where the father is the outstanding figure, a son may come to feel that he may never be able to equal such masculinity. Even should the father be an excellent parent, should he be very eminent in his profession, surrounded by the veneration of all who come to the house, it is not always possible to prevent the son from drawing this conclusion. Sons of famous men are very often discouraged, have difficulty in choosing a profession or go altogether to the bad. Where the mother is the dominant partner, the son may fight successfully against her influence, and we often find that great men had mothers of exceptionally forceful personality. But the son may on the other hand succumb and remain his whole life a pampered weakling dependent upon his mother or upon some mother substitute. A girl who, owing to her dethronement, turns towards the father and models herself upon him may develop very 'masculine' traits. It may also happen that if the father is weak and irresponsible and the girl notices that the family is upheld only by the mother, she may conclude that women must depend upon themselves and develop a masculine form of self-reliance. A girl who sees that her mother obtains her own way with her husband by feminine charm may take this as an example of the way in which men should be handled. Boys who have learned how to please their mothers may choose wives whom they can please in the same

way. Girls who have fought against their fathers will tend to choose husbands against whom they can continue the fight. If we see a husband whose wife is unfaithful to him, we may sometimes find that he had a mother who neglected him. These repetitions occur through the need of the individual to maintain his style of life. From this angle we can begin to understand a subject hitherto not very much explored either by psychologists or by novelists, namely, the factors which govern the choice of a love-partner.

The influence upon the child of his position in the family constellation has already been described. The difficulties experienced by a boy who is outstripped by a younger sister, of an only boy in a family of girls, or the reverse, of a girl dethroned in favour of a younger, more privileged brother, will give further pointers to the child's striving and may serve to discourage him in the fulfilment of his sexual role. The manner in which he experiences his body will be another contributory factor. Here Adler drew special attention to the doubts which may arise in the mind of a child should he possess physical features which can be construed as reminiscent of the other sex. An exceptionally beautiful boy who is told by visitors to the family that he is 'just like a girl' or that he 'ought to have been born a girl' may begin to question in his own mind the nature of his sex. His good looks may also lead to pampering, so that he learns to rely upon exploiting feminine or 'weak' characteristics. Pampered, beautiful boys, sensing all this femininity in themselves, may live in a state of 'hermaphroditic uncertainty' as to the true nature of their sexual role. Obsessed by their anxiety not to be mistaken for girls, they may grow up with an exaggerated protest of male arrogance, callousness, cruelty, or cynicism, traits which we see in their extreme form in the case of the handsome criminal. In other cases, feeling unable to maintain as masculine a front as other men, they make take to the feminine line, exploit their charm and perhaps become homosexual.

Discouragement of any kind always implies for the child

a certain degree of hermaphroditic uncertainty. The ideas of superiority and masculinity are so closely linked that failures quite outside the sphere of sex may set the child wondering whether he is 'masculine' enough. Sex is often used as a metaphor, the phrase 'as if I were weak' having substituted for it the more colourful and emphatic 'as if I were only a girl'. The metaphor may be rendered more emphatic still by using actual physical comparisons. In ordinary conversation it is common to express sorrow by remarking 'It is as if my heart would burst', or fear by remarking 'It was as if my legs were turned to jelly', or bewilderment by such a phrase as 'It made my head spin'. The organs of the body offer us graphic imagery, and not least the sexual organs. The boy who views his discouragement in terms of the phrase 'as if I were only a girl' may carry his comparison farther and act as if he were saying 'my genitals are inadequate'. In the same way the disappointment of a girl at not having been born a boy may be expressed by acting 'as if she were deprived or castrated'.

Masturbation in children may be taken as generally a sign of discouragement. The child's attention has become too anxiously riveted upon himself and he expresses his sense of weakness in this symptom or organ-jargon. As usual, the symptom should not be allowed to preoccupy us, but the child's attention should be directed to outside interests, and he should be assured in simple, emphatic terms that sex cannot be changed, that boys always grow up to be men and girls to be women. 'Sometimes a mother pays too much attention to the first sexual movements in childhood and thereby tends to make the child overvalue their significance. She is perhaps terrified and is always occupied with such a child, talking to him about these matters and punishing him. Now we know that many children like to be the centre of attention and hence it is frequently the case that a child continues his habits precisely because he is scolded for them. It is better not to overvalue the subject with the child, but to treat the matter

as one of the ordinary difficulties. If one does not show children that one is impressed by these matters one will have a much easier time.¹

It is, of course, at adolescence that we see whether or not a child's preparation for his sexual role has been adequate. 'There are whole libraries of books on adolescence, and almost all of them deal with the subject as if it were a dangerous crisis during which the whole character of an individual could change. There are many dangers in adolescence, but it is not true that it can change character. It provides the growing child with new situations and new tests. He feels that he is nearing the front of life. Mistakes in his style will reveal themselves that were hitherto unobserved. They were present, however, and a practised eye could always have seen them. Now they develop importance and cannot be overlooked. For almost every child, adolescence means one thing above all else; he must prove that he is no longer a child. . . . Very many of the expressions of adolescence are the outcome of the desire to show independence, equality with adults, and manhood or womanhood. The direction of these expressions will depend on the meaning which the child has attributed to being "grown up".²

Adolescence is simply one of the biggest test situations in life, when all the problems of finding a place in society, of choosing an occupation, of approaching the other sex confront the child at once, while in many cases he also finds himself abruptly severed from his school background and school comrades and standing before the world without supporting ties. 'Sometimes a child, badly prepared for life, feels himself in a panic at the approach of these problems. With regard to society, he is bashful and reserved, he isolates himself and stays at home. With regard to occupation, he can find no work that attracts him and is sure that he would be a failure in everything. With regard to love and mar-

1. *Science of Living*, pp. 252-3.

2. *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 182.

riage, he is embarrassed with the other sex and scared at meeting them. If he is spoken to he blushes; he cannot find words to reply.¹ Other children at this time may become arrogant, hypercritical of the parents, and may carry their revolt to the point of engaging in sexual adventures. They may get themselves into scrapes to demonstrate to the parents that they must still be taken care of or to test, like the prodigal son, the parents' continual affection and reliability. Sex can be the shortest way of demonstrating independence without having to face any of the real responsibilities of adulthood. But more often, the adolescent seeks to keep sex at a distance, at least for a while. Romantic attachments, especially when they involve some impracticable choice of a partner, express the hesitant 'Yes-But' attitude. The common tendency for adolescents to fall in love with heroes or film stars should not, however, be ridiculed by parents. It has its uses as a means of gaining for the child the necessary time for adaptation.

Masturbation, which commonly recurs at this period, must also be regarded as a means of gaining time. Trouble starts only if it becomes an obsession bound up with feelings of guilt. The person broods upon his weakness and finds in it proof of his pre-existing sense of his own worthlessness. His mind becomes riveted upon the question of how to control himself, but this very preoccupation serves to fill his thoughts with tempting fantasies. The question is now, which shall prove stronger, his 'will' or his 'urges'. An exaggerated interior battle develops. The urges grow stronger, the self-reproaches grow deeper. Sex, from being an objective problem, becomes a subjective struggle against his own self-created desires. This interior conflict acts as an evasion of the real task and must be regarded as a neurotic alibi. 'If only' he had not this weakness, the subject can say to himself, how much could he not accomplish.

Neurotic sexual disorders in general may be regarded as a means of putting the test at a distance and of providing

an alibi in the event of failure. Disorders of the type of psychic impotence have been likened by Adler to a stammer. 'How could I cure a stammerer,' he said, 'if I believed stammering to be caused by some subtle and unknown organic deficiencies? I have plenty of evidence that the stammerer does not wish to join with others, and he can generally talk quite well when he is alone; he may even be able to read or recite excellently; so that I can only regard his stammer as the expression of his attitude towards others.'¹ The impotent shows the same 'Yes-But' hesitation before his problem, the same shyness and timidity which mark the case of the stammerer. He approaches his problem, like all neurotics, in a state of extreme tension, terrified at the thought of his loss of prestige were he to fail. His mind is thus concentrated wholly on himself when it ought to be concentrated upon his partner. Sometimes he introduces other irrelevant ideas, complains to himself that conditions are not arranged rightly or that his partner has done or said something to disturb him. He can then attribute any failure to these disturbing factors and his prestige is saved. Often his interest tends to subside when he feels the interest of his partner rising, for this co-operative response from his partner seems to him like competition, and therefore it is not unusual for men to prefer women to remain passive in order not to interfere with their domination. The impotence, like all weaknesses, is gradually converted into its own compensation. Like a stammer, again, it can be used as a means of keeping the other person waiting. Finally, there may arise a vindictive satisfaction in disappointing the partner and in showing this depreciation of her attractiveness. Impotence may also develop directly out of feelings of resentment against the partner, may be the reaction of a man who finds something too grasping, domineering or highly expectant in the woman's general attitude towards him. The sexual function is too delicately

responsive to the psychic situation for it to be possible always to judge exactly where the failure lies.

It is as well for women to realize that the male is 'inferior' to the female in regard to the certainty of his sexual performance. The woman can perform or at least permit the sexual act at any time, but the man's performance is much more dependent upon the vagaries of condition and mood. The result is that the entire male psyche is haunted by the fear of failure and impotence. The masculine protest, with all its boastfulness, has probably this 'organic uncertainty' as its deepest basis. The exaggerated importance attached to sexual adequacy causes a man who fails the deepest shame, may seem to invalidate his whole personality, may even prevent him for a long time from initiating further attempts at sexual relations. If the woman shows that she shares his tension lest a failure may occur, or if she takes a failure personally and resents it, the situation will obviously become far worse. But the matter is not difficult to set right where she has tact and sympathy. It is necessary above all that the tension should be dissipated, that any failure should be treated lightly, with frankness and humour, as an occurrence for which both parties are equally responsible.

Of the perversions it is hardly necessary to speak at length, since all are after the same model. 'The dialect of the sexual organs,' says Adler, 'is especially expressive. . . . Each case has its peculiarities, but in practically every one the patient is expressing by a disorder of the sexual functions a stoppage, hesitation or escape in the face of the three life problems.'¹ All show a feeling of impotence or inadequacy and the same attempts as we saw in the case of the impotent to reach a more commanding position. The fetishist can perform only if his attention is concentrated elsewhere than upon the partner, thereby limiting 'competition' and showing his depreciation. Other perverts choose as objects of desire some being whom they consider weaker than themselves, such as a minor. Whoever or whatever they choose

is usually difficult of access, either through rarity or because of some social prohibition. Desire is heightened by the obstacles which the pervert has placed in the path of his fulfilment, and this heightened desire acts as a confirmation of his potency. Often the social prohibitions encountered result in a feeling of guilt, and the conflict between his 'urges' and his 'will' follow the course described in the case of masturbation. An interior struggle is created which avoids the real problem. The guilt which the person feels may become a handy excuse for not putting his unconquerable urges into execution. It would be to take the neurotic at his own valuation to imagine that he was possessed of a drive more powerful than that of an ordinary person. 'Anyone,' Adler remarked, 'can oversex himself who wants to be a sexual hero. There is no difficulty in it.'¹ Even when a person takes the 'weak' or masochistic line, we shall always find that he regards himself as the dominating party. The masochist triumphs through weakness as the melancholic patient triumphs through tears and sorrow.

Homosexuality is perhaps the commonest of all these sexual disorders and the one which has aroused the widest public discussion. Once more we have to dispose of the question of inborn tendencies. It is true that in homosexuality as well as in other perversions an organic readiness may sometimes be found. Not everybody can pervert himself, just as we have seen that not everybody can produce some particular symptom such as migraine or an epileptic seizure. In the perversions there may be various localized sensitivities or inferiorities upon which, since childhood, the person's attention has been focused and upon which he has built up his particular method of sexual evasion. There may be some special irritability of the skin, some inferiority of the digestive apparatus and the anal region, some visual defect leading to heightened curiosity. One can well understand how a child who is strongly impressed by what he sees and who at the same time is sexually discouraged may

anxiously and continually compare his physique with that of other children and may initiate a training towards voyeur or exhibitionist tendencies. In many homosexuals one will find the attraction towards persons of the same sex coupled with other perverse components, with exhibitionism, with various types of fetishistic interest, with sadistic or masochistic inclinations, with preferences for partners, whether minors, cripples, or old persons, who are deemed weaker than oneself. What remains when these part-components are subtracted is the child's feeling of uncertainty in regard to his sexual role, that 'psychic hermaphroditism' which Adler regarded as the general foundation of all abnormal deviations. For this psychic hermaphroditism there may also exist a constitutional basis. 'There are genuine hermaphrodites with whom it is difficult to say whether one is dealing with girls or boys. They can decide for themselves what use they make of their hermaphroditism. Among the pseudo-hermaphrodites there are to be found malformations which have a deceptive similarity to the organ of the other sex. The fact is that every human being carries in him traces of the other sex, just as there are also hormones of the other sex in the urine. This gives occasion for a surmise that seems rather bold: viz., that there is a twin hidden in every one of us. Twinship is marked by the most varied of forms, and the possibility of the simultaneous existence of two sexual forms in human beings will be decided when the problem of twinship is solved. We know that every human being is born from male and female material. It is quite possible that in the investigation of the question of twinship we may come across problems which will throw more light on the hermaphroditism present in every person.'¹

It is possible to find homosexuals who show physical characteristics reminiscent of the opposite sex. But, unfortunately for any argument in favour of inborn tendencies, it is possible to find normal people with these same charac-

teristics. One will also find homosexuals whose physique has no points of resemblance with that of the opposite sex. That twin which Adler surmises to exist in every person provides no more than a possibility which any person could exploit in order to reach a homosexual goal. Just as it is not necessary for a visual type to become an exhibitionist, so it is not necessary for a person with certain characteristics of the opposite sex to become a homosexual, and he can also become one without any help from such characteristics. The decisive question is not any organic hermaphroditism but the psychic hermaphroditism, the feeling of uncertainty as to his sexual role. Should a man show a feminine physical appearance or a woman the reverse, this uncertainty may be reinforced, and should this uncertainty lead to a perversion, the physical characteristics will be offered as 'proof' of the inborn nature of the tendencies. 'A man came to me,' said Adler, 'well built, with the muscles of an athlete. He had admittedly a less pronounced growth of hair on his face than the normal man. He informed me that his brothers were likewise not distinguished for their hair-growth, although this had not been true of his father. His father, an immigrant, had come from a region well known for the fact that the race of people inhabiting it possessed a meagre facial hair-growth. This trait, of which the patient had spoken to physicians, and which he had persuaded himself was a sign of his hereditary homosexuality, he himself could demonstrably trace back to a racial peculiarity. Yet this seemed in no way to have affected his attitude.'¹

The homosexual will also quote dreams as evidence of the congenital nature of his preferences. He does not realize that this 'evidence' points in a precisely opposite direction. We dream to reinforce our attitudes, and were the preferences really innate there would be no particular reason to dream about them. Nor are any experiences, real or imagined, of childhood seduction which a person may offer

1. *Theory and Practice of Individual Psychology*, p. 190.

to account for his perversion to be regarded as other than selected material. The homosexual is no more bound by these experiences than he is by some physical peculiarity like an absence of facial hair. 'We know that such apparent or really homosexual experiences in childhood are extraordinarily common and that the homosexual experiences described by patients turn out frequently to be of so vague a type that we can at best draw no conclusion from them except that it is quite remarkable to notice the extent to which the homosexual regards such early experiences as basic for his whole development. . . . A second objection is the enormously frequent occurrence of facultative homosexual experiences, i.e. of a certain number of homosexual experiences in the life of an individual, be it in childhood, on long journeys, as in the case of sailors, in prisons, in the life of the soldier or in boarding schools. This facultative homosexuality which many reliable informants assume to be almost a normal manifestation in the life of every individual, does not incline us any the more to attribute a preponderating importance to the factor of heredity.'¹

The customs of the ancient Greeks, where facultative homosexuality was raised almost to the level of an institution, thus provide an argument which the homosexual who believes in the innateness of his tendencies would do well not to mention. It is here an opportunity to point out that while it is difficult to imagine a society which did not demand adaptation from the individual along the lines of the three problems described by Adler, the form taken by these demands will vary widely in accordance with the structure of whatever society we are considering. The form of contribution towards solving the problem of work which is demanded of an individual by a nomad, warrior tribe will not be the same as that demanded by a settled peasant community or by a large industrial civilization. Social and sexual demands will likewise differ largely according to the structure of society. In one society it may be permissible to

marry four wives at once, but among ourselves a man who insists upon marrying four wives at once sets himself a problem – and one that is not solved by reference to the customs of a Mohammedan society. The homosexual also sets himself a problem in the context of the age and civilization in which he lives.

The crux of this whole difficult question is not the practice itself but the adaptive failure which the practice involves. The practice in ancient times would not have involved adaptive failure and would not therefore have led to feelings of inferiority and neurosis. Nor would it have been used as a means of excluding normal relations with the opposite sex. But the modern homosexual experiences the demand for the normal which our society is making and fights against this demand with the weapon of his self-created predilections. 'It is hardly feasible to believe that – irrespective of the manner in which he has come to his viewpoint and his emotional outlook – the homosexual should not have felt, noticed and utilized the tremendous resistances that have blocked his path during his homosexual evolution. We might say that it is so infinitely more difficult to be homosexual than normal that this fact alone should give us the measure of the tremendous expenditure of energy necessary for going through life as such. This expenditure of energy is noticeable in every pervert. It can be observed in the very nature of his deductions, in his attitude towards men, women, towards his own experience. Step by step we can see the preparation he makes for coming to a unified attitude, out of which it will not be easy to shake him.'¹

The prevalence of homosexuality in our time probably has its origin in the rivalry and competitiveness which disturbs the relationship between the sexes. Man has an especially heavy burden of responsibility to bear and it is not surprising that a large number of men should seek to avoid it. In the childhood of the homosexual there have

probably been factors which impressed on him in some particular manner the difficulty of the normal. He may have formed a poor opinion of the normal if he felt there to have been friction between his own parents. He may have been a younger child attached to his mother and felt himself unequal to attaining the masculinity of his father or his elder brother. He may have been so dominated by sisters that he determined thereafter to avoid the influence of women. He may have been good-looking in a feminine way and learned to charm by feminine means. His sexual training began very early. He looked with admiration always to his own sex, and at the other sex not at all, or only with dislike. He chose interests which would accord with his goal, and he modelled his manners, gestures, even his gait according to the type of sexual appeal which he wished to make. In his way of dressing he probably brought himself into opposition to accepted custom and used the ensuing disapproval which he experienced to reinforce his opposition. In his dreams, his fantasies, and his remembrances he was continually training his direction. 'The great difficulty of changing a homosexual lies not only in his lack of social adjustment, but in the invariable absence of the right training which ought to begin in early childhood. The attitude towards the other sex is strained in a mistaken direction almost from the beginning of life. In order to realize this fact one must note the kind of intelligence, of behaviour and of expectations which a case exhibits. Compare normal persons walking in the street or mixing in society with a homosexual in the same situations. The normal are chiefly interested in the opposite sex, the homosexual only in his own.'¹

In many cases the homosexuality is a device for gaining time to solve the sexual problem. The person may come to the normal later, when he has successfully solved the question of earning a living and feels the courage to face full sexual responsibility. This is perhaps less likely where he

makes a retreat into some circle where his tastes are condoned, or adopts some profession where his feminine qualities are actually of use to him. Supported by such a circle he may escape a good deal of that social pressure to conform which would otherwise make his life unhappy, and he may also have the compensation of succeeding excellently in solving the other social problems. Under such favourable conditions, neurotic tendencies may remain quiescent. Nevertheless, like every neurotic, he pays for his neurosis by the limitations which he has imposed upon himself. He must live always to a large extent upon the periphery of society. If he loves, his love has no social aim to guarantee its continuity. If he makes a home, it will remain a barren one. If he works, it can be only for himself, for he has not produced the new life in which his efforts could be invested. Thus, in escaping all responsibilities he loses the satisfactions which responsibilities would bring, and all his activities remain limited by a fundamental selfishness.

Our civilization has reserved a very special place in its structure for the cult of love. This love can only be taken to its highest expression between two persons, with the result that monogamy becomes the logical social ideal. Unfaithfulness or divorce as soon as difficulties arise in the relationship tend to turn love into a bagatelle. When love is embarked upon with the knowledge that it may be temporary, each partner thinks only of the immediate stimulus which is to be derived from it, and once the passionate phase has spent itself will begin to look elsewhere. Love should therefore be entered into from the start with the intention of marriage and permanency. It must aim towards the founding of a home and the raising of a family, and only when both partners set this as their common ideal will they be able to continue from the passionate first phase of their relationship into a lasting companionship. Love cannot exist for itself. It must be directed to an external social goal – that of perpe-

tuating the race – and will only endure if this goal is kept in view. ‘The structure of love . . . demands a decision final for eternity, since it is bound to have unending results in the children and in the welfare of humanity. It is a dismal prospect to realize that our mistakes and blunders, our lack of social feeling in love, can lead to our exclusion from everlasting existence on this earth in our children and in our cultural achievements. Such trifling with love as is seen in promiscuity, in prostitution or in perversions deprives love of all its grandeur and glory and all its aesthetic charm.’¹

1. *Social Interest*, p. 61.

CHAPTER 5: Cure and Prevention of Neurosis

1. The Work of Analysis

Adler regarded neurosis as an error, and errors are capable of correction. But neurosis is a long-sustained error, committed in earliest childhood and maintained thereafter by a constant process of training. It is one from which the patient can be freed only by means of a reorientation of his entire personality. The Adlerian technique of cure therefore requires time and patience and an absence of insistence upon quick results. 'The usual question about the duration of the treatment is not easy to answer,' says Adler. 'I consider this question quite justified, because a large number of those who visit me have heard of treatments that have lasted eight years and have been unsuccessful. Treatment by Individual Psychology, if properly carried out, must show at least a partial success in three months, in most cases even earlier.'¹

If the task of changing a person's whole life-style is a formidable undertaking, the psychiatrist approaches it at least with certain initial advantages. 'First, we can begin wherever we choose; every expression will lead us in the same direction - towards the one motive, the one melody around which the personality is built. Secondly, we are provided with a vast store of material. Every word, thought, feeling or gesture contributes to our understanding. Any mistake we might make in considering one expression too hastily can be checked and corrected by a thousand other expressions. We cannot finally decide the meaning of one

expression until we can see its part in the whole; but every expression is saying the same thing, every expression is urging us towards the solution. We are like archaeologists who find fragments of earthenware, tools, the ruined walls of buildings, broken monuments and leaves of papyrus; and from these fragments proceed to infer the life of a whole city which has perished. But we are dealing, not with something that has perished, but with the inter-organized aspects of a human being, a living personality which can set before us continuous new manifestations of its own meaning.

'It is not an easy task to understand a human being. Individual Psychology is perhaps the most difficult of all psychologies to learn and to practise. We must listen always for the whole. We must be sceptical until the key becomes self-evident. We must gather hints from a multitude of small signs – from the way a man enters the room, the way he greets us and shakes hands, the way he smiles, the way he walks. On one point we may go astray, but others are always forthcoming to correct or confirm us. Treatment itself is an exercise in co-operation and a test of co-operation. We can succeed only if we are genuinely interested in the other. We must be able to see with his eyes and listen with his ears. He must contribute his part to our understanding. We must work out his attitudes and his difficulties together. Even if we felt that we had understood him, we should have no witness that we were right unless he also understood. A tactless truth can never be the whole truth; it shows that our understanding was not sufficient.'¹

The interpretation begins as soon as the person enters the room, by noticing his demeanour. 'Let us consider attitudes in standing, for instance. We notice promptly whether a child or an adult stands upright or whether he is crooked or bent. This is not very difficult. We have to watch especially for exaggerations of attitude. A person who stands too straight, in a stretched position, causes us to suspect that he is using too much power to assume this

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, pp. 71-2.

posture. We can suppose that this person feels much less great than he wants to appear. . . . On the other hand we see persons of just the opposite posture, persons who appear bent and are always stooping. Such a posture implies to a certain extent that they are cowards. But it is a rule of our art and science that we should always be cautious, looking for other points and never judging solely by one consideration. We ask, "Are we right in insisting that persons who stoop are always cowards?" Then we will notice how such a person always tries to rest upon something, to lean on a table or chair, for instance. He does not trust his own power but wants to be supported. This reflects the same attitude of mind as when standing crooked, and so when we find both types of action present our judgement is somewhat confirmed.¹

An Adlerian treatment is marked by little formality beyond what is necessary to keep attention focused upon the case. 'I see an advantage in not interrupting the patient's movements. Let him get up, come and go, or smoke as he likes. . . . Occasionally we should tell the patient to sit anywhere he likes, without indicating any particular seat. The distance from the doctor or the consultant reveals – precisely as it does in the case of school-children – a good deal about the patient's nature.'² 'We will find that a person who does not want to approach others and who always stands far away is also reserved in other respects. We will find that he does not speak enough and is usually silent. . . . We may experiment with a child who wants to be supported. Sit his mother on a chair and let the child come into the room. We will find that he does not look at any other person, but goes directly towards his mother and leans on a chair or against his mother.'³

Informality in the consulting room has the further advantage of emphasizing the perfect freedom of the patient in all other respects. The treatment is itself an object lesson

1. *Science of Living*, pp. 136–8.

2. *Social Interest*, pp. 287–8.

3. *Science of Living*, pp. 136–8.

in the attitude to life which the consultant desires to instil. The patient must feel that he comes of his own volition, can break off the treatment should he desire, and that the onus and responsibility for his cure thus rests with himself. The consultant must, in the same manner, emphasize the basic equality between himself and the patient even to sitting on the same level with the patient instead of allowing him to lie on a couch. Informality also avoids introducing any air of mystery into the consulting room. The patient is already too preoccupied with the mysterious nature of his complaints, and the endeavour of the psychologist is directed towards persuading him to take more open views. The least air of mystery creates a suggestive atmosphere, implying submission of the patient to the doctor's authority and thus contradicting the aim of treatment, which is always to awaken the patient's sense of responsibility for himself. Nor can anything but resistance be expected – either in the form of positive or negative 'transference' – if any form of authoritative treatment is attempted. The abnegation of all authority is more difficult than it looks, since the nature of the case is that the patient does not desire to be equal, but to subjugate the doctor either by love or by hate. To allow him to indulge in such 'transferences' would serve only to prolong the treatment. The whole tone of the conversations must be against emotionalism of any kind, must aim at rational understanding and steady deflation of the existing neurotic tension. Humour, such as Adler possessed in such abundance, is an invaluable asset, since, if one can occasionally introduce a joke, the patient feels that his condition cannot be so bad. 'I have always considered it a great advantage to keep the level of tension in the treatment as low as possible, and I have frankly developed a method of saying to almost every patient that there are certain jocular situations that are almost completely similar in structure to his particular neurosis, and therefore that he can take his trouble more lightly than he is doing.'¹

While, naturally, the privacy of the consulting room is maintained inviolate as far as adult patients are concerned, Adler developed in Vienna the novel method of admitting a limited number of students into his child guidance clinics. 'The public character of these clinics has often been attacked. Our experience has shown, however, that the appearance of the child before a large gathering has a stimulating effect upon him. The publicity of the procedure suggests to the child that his trouble is not a private affair, since strangers are also interested in it. His social-mindedness is more awakened through this. The child realizes that he is surrounded with people who take a great interest in his fate and difficulties, without looking down on him and without forcing their help on him. If he were to witness an emphasis on 'guilt' he would naturally have an aversion for the publicity of the guidance. He is however treated with confidence and as an equal; he finds that his inability to meet his tasks is regarded here as something temporary, as due to an error and by no means as guilt. Under such a treatment the sense of self-respect is not hurt, and we therefore have no reason to give up the publicity of our educational guidance, which we regard as a means of stimulating the social interest of the child. The public character of the guidance is furthermore a means of training professional educators in the art of bringing up healthy and courageous human beings. It goes without saying that we do not insist rigidly upon the publicity of the treatment, since compulsory measures are incompatible with the fundamental principles of Individual Psychology. The treatment thus occurs privately whenever the person to be guided desires it so, or feels offended by the publicity, or whenever the discussion of delicate problems is involved, or finally whenever the special conditions of the case require the exclusion of publicity.'¹

The session opens, as it does in most other clinics, with a

1. Regine Seidler and Ladislaus Zilahi, in *Guiding the Child*, by Adler and Associates, pp. 23-4.

report from the teacher or welfare worker from whom the case originated. The report is discussed by the psychiatrist with the students until all possible deductions from it have been made and a fairly clear picture has been formed of the type of child to expect. It is desirable that both parents should attend the clinic so that the relationship between them and the child may be observed and their joint co-operation gained for the treatment. Generally, the parents are admitted first, while the child is left to play with other children awaiting their turn under the supervision of an assistant. But this order may be reversed if it is felt that the child might fear that the parents in their statements to the doctor will prejudice his case in advance.

Individual Psychology has provided a short Questionnaire¹ for the understanding and treatment of difficult children, which will be found useful to all educators. Parents may also peruse it with profit, since it is often only necessary for them to know the right questions to ask themselves concerning their child to be able to see the meaning of his mistakes. The first questions cover all points concerning the child's physical heredity, weaning difficulties, possible trouble or backwardness in learning to walk, to talk, and to manage his functions. The questions that follow elucidate the child's environmental situation, the difference of age between him and other brothers and sisters, whether he is legitimate or illegitimate, whether both parents are at home, whether he has a step-parent, whether there are other persons, relatives such as an aunt or a grandparent, or lodgers, in the house, and what is the economic situation of the home. The parents will also be asked to give their appreciation of the child's general characteristics, whether he is shy and seclusive in play, whether he likes to rule the others, whether he fears to be left alone, is difficult to get to school, suffers anxiety at night and so on. Finally, it is important to know when the

1. Given as an Appendix both to *Social Interest* and to *The Education of Children*.

trouble complained of started. This will generally be found to coincide with the birth of another child, some fall from parental favour, some success of another child in the family, an illness during which there may have been pampering, a change in the parents' economic situation, or a change in the school environment.

'If we see an expression or symptom and fail to recognize the meaning behind it,' says Adler, 'the best way to understand it is to reduce it in outline to a bare movement. Let us take, for example, the question of stealing. To steal is to remove property from another person to oneself. Let us now examine the goal of the movement; the goal is to enrich oneself and to feel more secure by possessing more. The point at which the movement sets out is therefore a feeling of being poor and deprived. The next step is to find out in what circumstances the individual is placed and in what conditions he feels deprived.'¹ If a child steals, the deprivation which he is making good is generally a want of affection. Either he has been too harshly brought up, or he feels another member of the family is preferred to himself. It is also important to know what he does with the proceeds of the theft. Very often it will be found that he uses these proceeds to bring presents to other children or to his teacher, thus clearly indicating his wish to buy the love or the admiration which he despairs of awakening in them by other means. So also in cases of lying, the nature of the lie will serve to indicate its purpose. 'When we hear of a child who lies, it is wise to learn in the very beginning whether he tells boastful lies or whether there is someone in the environment of whom he is afraid.'²

Children are often brought to a clinic on account of persistent laziness or backwardness. Laziness in general or in some particular subject for which the child is supposed to have no 'talent' is, in Adler's view, often only a method of meeting a situation in which the child fears to compete.

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 29.

2. *The Pattern of Life*, p. 90.

He withdraws his interest in the subject out of a fear that he would fail if he were to try. 'The lazy child,' says Adler, 'lives on the expectations of other people.' 'Sometimes teachers will say to a lazy pupil, "If you would work harder you could be the most brilliant pupil in the class." If he can gain such a reputation by doing nothing, why should he risk losing it by working? Perhaps, if he stopped being lazy, his reputation for hidden brilliance would come to an end? . . . A lazy child is almost always an ambitious child who is afraid of defeat.'¹

Apparent stupidity is likewise a sign of discouragement, and comes as a plea to be helped by the teacher or granted a special dispensation. By sheer stupidity one can become the centre of attention. 'One boy was very obedient at home, but he seemed to be stupid; he was backward at school and not at all quick-witted at home. He had a brother two years older than he, and the brother was quite different in his style of life. He was intelligent and active, but he was always getting into trouble on account of his impudence. The younger brother was one day overheard saying to the older brother, "I'd rather be as stupid as I am than as impudent as you are." His stupidity was really quite intelligent if we grant him the goal of escaping trouble. Because of his stupidity less was demanded of him, and if he committed errors he was not blamed for them. Granted his goal, he would have been a fool not to be stupid.'²

'We cannot avoid tests of one kind or another if we are to find out a child's present standard of mental development, character and social behaviour. Sometimes, indeed, a test such as the Intelligence Tests can be the salvation of a child. A boy has had bad school reports, for instance, and the teacher wishes to put him in a lower class. He is given an intelligence test and it is discovered that he could really be promoted. It ought to be realized, however, that we can never predict the limits of a child's future growth. The I.Q.

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 176.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 63.

should be used only to acquaint us with the child's difficulties, so that we may find a method to overcome them. In so far as my own experience goes, an I.Q., when it does not reveal actual feeble-mindedness, can always be changed if we discover the right method. The I.Q. should not be regarded as fixing a limit, set by fate or by heredity, to the child's future achievements. Nor should the child himself or the child's parents be acquainted with his I.Q. They do not know the purpose of the tests and they think that they represent a final judgement.¹

When we consider how often in the biographies of geniuses and great men we read that they were considered stupid, if not actually mentally deficient, by the preceptors of their youth, we will realize the importance of Adler's remarks upon the value of tests. 'The tendency to consider a child as feeble-minded,' he writes in another place, 'is rare among members of our school, so rare indeed that errors are sometimes made in an opposite sense and a child who is really feeble-minded is considered merely as a problem child. This is a smaller fault than to declare a normal child to be feeble-minded.'² Should a child show an intelligence of more than two years below the average for its age, then one must take account of the possibility of feeble-mindedness and proceed to a thorough mental and physical examination. But in border-line cases these methods may still not suffice. 'For this reason I have made it my custom to undertake a third form of examination, one which is decisive when conducted by an experienced Individual Psychologist. It is a question of establishing whether the child before one has a style of life.'³ If it can be shown that the actions of a child make a pattern and point to a goal, however abnormal that goal may be, then the child is really intelligent. 'Such a child,' says Adler, 'has an abnormal style of life, but he behaves with a corresponding

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 164.

2. *Die Seele des Schwererziehbaren Schulkindes*, Ch. 2.

3. *Ibid.*

intelligence.'¹ The real mental deficient, on the contrary, has not the intelligence to follow out his own style of life, and his actions are not consequential with a goal.

Having heard the teacher's report and considered any material provided by tests, and having questioned the parents, it is now time to admit the child himself. Much, of course, can be learned from his manner of entry, from noticing whether he hesitates or steps forward challengingly, whether it is to his father or to his mother that he turns for support in the new situation, whether he refuses to answer when spoken to, shows enjoyment at finding himself the centre of attention, or plays the clown. In all cases he is treated with importance, shaken hands with as if he were an adult and made to sit on a chair which brings him on a level with the psychiatrist. He is asked apparently simple questions about his home and school life, his relationship with other brothers and sisters, teachers and comrades, asked to relate his favourite story and to describe his play. Without raising the question of the child's preferences for particular people, information as to alliances and antipathies within the family circle can be obtained by asking which brother or sister appears to him most like and which most unlike himself. The one most unlike himself is generally the one with whom he is in the greatest competition. But it is also possible for two children in competition to form a close alliance, in which one is the leader and the other is resigned to being the led. Similarly love or dependence upon a stern parent may be due to the child's awareness of his inability to rebel. 'I have often found that a child may be jealous, yet all the same may love his brothers and sisters. He may feel himself injured by their presence yet be able to get along with them. The same feeling may lead to different results. A little girl of five, the only child until that moment, found herself with a younger sister. Later it was learned that this eldest had killed three little girls, as if to say 'All girls must be made to disappear.' Towards her

1. *Die Seele des Schwererziehbaren Schulkindes*, Ch. 2.

sister, however, her conduct had always been irreproachable.¹

Other questions of the same nature will suggest themselves, such as who in the family is the tallest, the strongest, the cleverest, the prettiest, the most masculine, who has most friends, who is most punished, who has the best sense of humour, who is most quarrelsome.² In this way the psychiatrist is able to see the picture of the situation, of which the parents and the teacher have already informed him, through the eyes of the child. The child will probably add further material by way of illustrative stories, and the psychiatrist will be ready to make the appropriate comments. These comments will be designed to make plain to the child what should have been his natural deduction from his experiences. 'So I suppose you did such and such,' the psychiatrist will remark at the appropriate point in the child's story. The psychiatrist takes it consistently for granted that the child will have drawn a friendly deduction, and one can often observe how the child who has done otherwise pauses to absorb this new point of view. It is generally unnecessary to make any reference to the bad habits or specific symptoms of which complaint has been made, and of which the child, through frequent correction, is already sufficiently self-conscious. Nor would theoretical explanations be of much value. 'It is only seldom, and this in the case of older children – that is to say, of those who are about twelve years old – that it is advisable to reveal to them their whole situation, their mistakes and false aims. In this respect the treatment of children differs from that of adults. What forms the goal of our treatment in the case of adults is for obvious reasons out of place and also impossible in the case of children. We confine ourselves here to occasional brief explanations of the difficulties with which the child is handicapped. We would, for instance, say to a

1. *Die Seele des Schwererziehbaren Schulkindes*, Ch. 18.

2. v. Dr. R. Dreikurs: 'The Psychological Interview in Medicine' (*American Journal of Individual Psychology*, Vol. x, No. 3/4).

pampered child who does not get ahead at school, "You believe that everything goes by itself, and because you have difficulties with your school work, you believe that you cannot succeed in anything and you give up the race." Further and deeper explanation would be beyond the reach of the child.¹

Chief emphasis is therefore to be laid on obtaining the co-operation of the teacher and of the parents in attempting a different method of education. The psychiatrist has the delicate task of never appearing in the light of a judge who condemns the parents' mistakes. 'The parents are after all not skilled pedagogues and they usually have only tradition to guide them. . . . The parents should never be reproached even when there are just grounds. . . . To tell them that they have done this or that wrongly only offends them and makes them unwilling to co-operate. Suggestions to parents should never be made in an authoritative manner. The sentences should always have a "perhaps", "probably", "possibly", "you might try it this way".² It must be pointed out to the parents simply how the matter looks from the child's point of view. Practical ways must be suggested by which the child can be given a sense of success. Although the child does not grasp theoretical points, he has a very quick appreciation of practical results. If he finds that the direction indicated by the psychiatrist – backed, as it must be, by the co-operation of the parents in arranging an opportunity – bears results, he may often alter his whole previous line of conduct after only one interview.

It was always fascinating to watch Adler himself at work in a child guidance clinic. He had the faculty, born of long experience, of correctly gauging the import of every trait and the intuition to make exactly the right response. To one child who was shown into his clinic and who expressed his enjoyment of football, Adler would reply, 'So you like being all by yourself in goal.' He did not have to wait to be told

1. Dr. Alexandra Adler in *Guiding the Child*.

2. *Education of Children*, pp. 241-2.

that this was a child who always played the goalkeeper. To the next child, who expressed a similar liking for football, Adler would say, 'Yes, its fine barging others around, isn't it!' What he required of his students was that they should acquire above all something of this swift, intuitive faculty in dealing with cases, a faculty which combines the assured skill of a surgeon with the imaginative grasp of an artist. The student must learn the art of 'correctly guessing' a situation. The patient's confidence is only secured if he feels that his analyst has the experience and sympathy to seize immediately the nature of his case. 'Individual Psychology is an art as well as a science,' Adler would often say, and it was for this reason that he called it the most difficult of all psychologies to practise.

To illustrate his methods before students, Adler would sometimes take written case histories handed up to him by his audience and 'construe' them in the manner of an 'unseen'. He would pause at each sentence of the report, develop all its meanings and connotations until the personality of the child under discussion began to come vividly to life. The following is a verbatim account of one such session with his students:

ADLER: To give you a precise idea of the manner in which we go to work, I will try to describe a case which I do not know or which I have forgotten, and I will argue it out before you. I have no idea of the matter described. I will try to follow the path which I habitually take in my practice as a doctor. It may be that I will make a mistake which will be revealed in the course of the report. I will not be discouraged by that. I am conscious of having a role like that of a painter or sculptor who must begin by working according to his experience and ability and must afterwards control his work, reinforcing, softening, and modifying the various traits until the portrait is correct.

I find myself before this description: 'I beg to put before you the following case and to ask if it would be possible to find an educational remedy. It concerns a child of eleven, well-developed, well behaved both at home and at school, at present in the first class.'

She belongs to the class which corresponds with her age. We

can conclude that, in so far as concerns the second task of life, that of work, this little girl is in her right place.

'In the morning, when this child must go off to school, she is so nervous that the whole household is upset.'

We see that often. The problem of school takes on an exaggerated importance for her. On the one hand, she is a good pupil, on the other, her attitude to the problem of school is one of extreme tension. But we could imagine that this girl might be strung up without all the other members of the family having to suffer. So we will draw the conclusion that we must underline this question of the trouble caused in the household. The nervous tension is explained not only by the girl's way of looking at things but by her intention to demonstrate to others the apparently frightening nature of the problem. Yet she is quite at the head of her class in spite of the enormous difficulties which she encounters. She overcomes the obstacles in spite of everything. We shall see if we find in what follows other points to confirm our idea of this particularly active type.

'As soon as she is awakened in the morning the child begins to weep and to say that she has been called too late.'

The others have to assist even at her getting up.

'She will not be in time. Instead of getting dressed, she sits down and cries.'

This really surprises us. In the case of this little girl we expected to see her arrive at school at the right hour, but with many difficulties. I will allow myself to put a question mark against the point. We shall certainly see by the sequel if it is really so. In our civilization it is impossible for a child who frequently arrives late at school to be at the same time a good pupil.

'Doing her hair, especially, gives rise to frequent complaints. No style of doing it pleases her, not even the style which usually pleases her most.'

One can only understand this fact as due to her desire to increase the nervous tension through the hairdressing ceremony.

'Time passes, and finally the child sets off at a run, without having breakfasted, crying and complaining. We have attempted to remedy the trouble over the hairdressing by having the hair cut short.'

If we are right, that will do no good. The manner of doing her hair is of no account to her. The question is one of creating a tension in her environment. We shall see whether in the new circumstances she has the style of life which we suppose to exist

among intelligent children, that is to say, whether she will find another method of arriving at the same end.

‘But that did little good, for all at once it became a question of the hair-net. The same complaints were made about the way of putting on the hair-net.’

She is intelligent all right! We can be reassured on that point!

‘It must be noticed at school that the child has left without having had her breakfast. I cannot imagine a child remaining attentive in class until eleven o’clock on an empty stomach.’

The doubt is expressed as to whether a child can hold out until eleven o’clock without breakfast. Now, if the child’s real aim were to have its hunger satisfied, it would hardly be possible for it to wait until eleven o’clock. As it is, this child has another aim. She wants to importune her environment over the question of school. I do not know if we should draw any other conclusions. However, we can say—this child is full of ambition. She desires to be the sole object of attention, at school as at home, and there she takes the useful road. We learn as well that she is very obedient at home; she has only this one fault, that she wants everyone to be continually occupied with her. In the morning, when she must go to school, her principal thought is, ‘How am I going to impress my parents with the enormous difficulty I am under?’ This is something which we could call Boastfulness.

If we want to establish the degree of courage of this child, we must say: she tries to present the solution of her problem as a brilliant performance. But that is not excess of courage, because, without her voluntarily intending it, without herself understanding it, she guarantees herself a certain security. If one day she is no longer such a good pupil, it will be the parents who are responsible. So we can say ‘This little girl has not much courage.’

We can also take her social feeling as the point of departure. Nobody will deny that the trouble to which she puts her family weighs little with her. We can establish that the only thing that matters to her is to wear a martyr’s crown. She is preoccupied solely with personal glory; she pays no attention to anyone else.

I regret to be unable to draw further conclusions, but we have no further information. We might ask, for instance, what situation has moulded the style of life of this girl? If I had to guess, I would say that she is an only child. Considering the importance which the mother attaches to food, I would generalize and say that in this family food plays a special role. We can go so far as to say that we can picture this child as delicate and pale. For if she were robust

and chubby, the mother would not be so anxious. But all these deductions do not help much to familiarize us with the picture of this child because we are making them solely as an exercise, without being able to confirm them.

A few words as to the treatment of this type of child. The girl dominates her family. She does not understand the matter thus. She experiences only the trouble and the tension of others. We can understand why she follows this path without envisaging its end, entirely preoccupied as she is with the difficulties which she has to meet. But if we could bring her to understand that she has grossly over-estimated the ordinary problems of school in order to be able to boast, that would be a big step forward. It is possible that in spite of this she would not be corrected. Perhaps, then, one might go further and show her exactly what a boastful person is. One would inculcate the conviction in her that only those boast who do not believe that they are adequate in themselves. A person who tries to put others into a commotion is one who does not believe himself able to prove his importance sufficiently by his own actions. To convince this girl one would have to have recourse to an explanation of other events and other memories. One would have to show her how, from her position as an only child, all these tendencies arise and lead to inescapable faults. One must tell her 'This sort of thing often happens to only children.' This will make her aware of something which she did not know before. This new knowledge will of itself influence her thought-processes. Her action would now be *openly* in contradiction with her social feeling. She would control herself and probably one would see the following sequence: The first days, after having caused her family the usual nervous tension, she would say to herself, 'Dr Adler claims that I do that solely to make myself interesting.' She would continue the trick for a certain time perhaps. Then soon, from the moment of getting up, she would think, 'Now I want to provoke a commotion in my environment.'

Other ways would be just as possible. For myself, I prefer to take other ways. If I thought it advisable, I might say 'School is the most important thing in the life of a human being. You should make more of a commotion still.' By means of exaggeration I would undermine her tendency to such conduct. I might say 'Write in big letters on a sheet of paper and hang over your bed "Every morning I must exhaust my family to the utmost".' She would then do knowingly, but with a bad conscience, what formerly she did unknowingly, but with a good conscience. I have

never yet found one of my patients who followed this last piece of advice.’¹

The method of humorous exaggeration which Adler here suggests cannot be applied unless accompanied by that deep assurance of friendliness which his whole manner radiated. It is needless to say how harmful to any child would be the slightest hint of ridicule. Adler’s method of approach to the patient varied enormously. He knew just when and where to apply the knife and when to lay the knife aside in favour of the utmost patience and gentleness. He considered that the student must learn to estimate very correctly three important factors in every case – the patient’s degree of social interest and courage, his degree of activity, and his degree of inferiority – and that the approach to him must depend upon the estimate of these three factors in combination. Thus, in the case under consideration, he evidently saw that the child was in the main proceeding along useful lines, and judged that the courage and social interest were sufficient to justify a fairly direct method. Adler was against all formulas. ‘I do not believe that a thoughtful person will make it a reproach against us that we try to *guess*, or deny that in the art of guessing we have achieved a certain dexterity. In fact, I consider it a first duty to train my pupils in the art of guessing. One should obviously not compare our type of guessing with the occasional guess of a person little trained in the art of Individual Psychology who imagines that when he pronounces words like “social feeling” and “over-compensation” or “unity of the life style” he has understood something. All he has seen is the piano; he knows nothing of the art of playing it.’²

1. *Die Seele des Schwererziehbaren Schulkindes*, Ch. 1.

2. *Op. cit.*, Ch. 3.

2. *Memories and Dreams*

Where children are concerned, we can secure an objective account of their behaviour from the parents as well as their own subjective picture of their situation, and check the one by the other. In the case of adults, the gathering of the relevant factual material has to come solely through the patient's own subjective statements. Interpretation may therefore be rather more difficult, and greater recourse has to be made to the checks upon our correctness provided by memories and dreams. The material derived from these should point always in the same direction, for 'the workings of fantasy give expression to the style of life, whether the individual recognizes this connexion or is completely ignorant of it. They can therefore be used as an open door through which we get a glimpse into the workshop of the mind. But if we use the right method, we shall always encounter the ego, the personality as a whole; while if we start with the wrong conception, we shall find what seems to be an antithesis of some kind, such as that between the conscious and the unconscious.'¹

A word is perhaps in place here about Adler's conception of the unconscious. In his earlier work he frequently uses the term, but found it less and less necessary to the later expositions of his psychology, even saying at one point that 'the use of the terms "consciousness" and "unconsciousness" to designate distinctive mental factors is incorrect in the practice of Individual Psychology.'² Here the phrase 'to designate distinctive mental factors' requires, perhaps, to be underlined. 'Consciousness and unconsciousness move together in the same direction and are not contradictions, as is so often believed. What is more, there is no definite line of demarcation between them. It is merely a question of discovering the purpose of their joint movement. It is

1. *Social Interest*, p. 244.

2. *Science of Living*, p. 56.

impossible to decide upon what is conscious and what is not until the whole connexion has been obtained.¹

If Adler was wont to make sparing use of the term unconscious it was because it has received through the theories of other psychologists a special implication with which he did not wish his own science to be identified. Theories which place conscious and unconscious in opposition to one another contradict his view of the unity of the personality. Their basis is the conception that the human psyche is a battleground of blind, quasi-mechanical forces and impulses. The deduction from this conception of the mind is that behaviour is the outcome of this subterranean battle, and is essentially purposeless and irresponsible. In Adler's view 'knowing' and 'not knowing' are always purposive and in league with one another to attain the end set by the whole personality. We 'know' what it suits our style of life to know, and we do not 'know' what it suits our style of life to keep secret from ourselves. Particularly the nature of the life style itself must remain 'not understood' because the infantile fiction upon which it is based would not be able to stand the test of comparison with objective fact were it to be formulated openly. 'In the life and development of man there is nothing that sets to work with greater secrecy than the construction of the ideal of personality.'² The unconscious, in fact, whose mysterious nature has been so heavily emphasized by some psychologists, is really only another of those tricks and subterfuges which the human psyche can play with itself. We can perform 'unconsciously with a good conscience' what we would otherwise have to perform 'consciously with a bad conscience'.

The purposive nature of conscious and unconscious can be seen at once in the choice we make of remembered experience. 'Among all psychic expressions, some of the most revealing are the individual's memories. His memories are the reminders he carries about with him of his own

1. *Science of Living*, p. 56.

2. *Neurotic Constitution*, p. 40.

limits and the meaning of circumstances. There are no "chance memories"; out of the incalculable number of impressions which meet an individual, he chooses to remember only those which he feels, however darkly, to have a bearing on his situation. Thus his memories represent his "Story of my Life"; a story which he repeats to himself to warn him or comfort him, to keep him concentrated on his goal, to prepare him, by means of past experiences, to meet the future with an already tested style of action. The use of memories to stabilize a mood can be plainly seen in everyday behaviour. If a man suffers a defeat and is discouraged by it, he recalls previous instances of defeat. If he is melancholy, all his memories are melancholy. When he is cheerful and courageous he selects quite other memories; the incidents he recalls are pleasant, they confirm his optimism. In the same way, if he is confronted with a problem, he will summon up memories which help to prepare the mood in which he is to meet it.

'What holds true of the variations of mood within an individual style of life holds true also of the structure and balance of his moods in general. A melancholic could not remain a melancholic if he remembered his good moments. He must say to himself: "All my life I was unfortunate"; and select only those events which he can interpret as instances of his unhappy fate. Memories can never run counter to the style of life. If an individual's goal of superiority demands that he should feel "other persons always humiliate me", he will choose for remembrance incidents which he can interpret as humiliations. In so far as his style of life alters, his memories also will alter; he will remember different incidents or he will put a different interpretation on the incidents he remembers.

'Early recollections have especial significance. To begin with, they show the style of life in its origins and in its simplest expressions. We can judge from them whether the child was pampered or neglected; how far he was training for co-operation with others; with whom he preferred to

co-operate; what problems confronted him and how he struggled against them. In the early recollections of a child who suffered from difficulties in seeing and who trained himself to look more closely, we shall find expressions of a visual nature. His recollections will begin "I looked around . . . ", or he will describe colours and shapes. A child who has difficulties of movement, who wanted to walk or to run or to jump, will show these interests in his recollections. Events remembered from childhood must be very near to the main interest of the individual; and if we know his main interest we know his goal and life style. It is this fact which makes early recollections of such value in vocational guidance.

'Let us now, for the sake of illustration, give a memory and attempt to interpret it. "Since my sister . . ." It is important to notice which people in the environment occur in first memories. When a sister occurs we can be pretty sure that the individual has felt greatly under her influence. "Since my sister and I were the youngest in the family I was not permitted to attend school until she (the younger) was old enough to go." Now the rivalry becomes evident. My sister has hindered me! She was younger and I was forced to wait for her! "Accordingly we began on the same day." We should not call this the best kind of education for a girl in her position. It might well give her the impression that, because she is the older, she must stay behind. In any case we see that this particular girl has interpreted it in this sense. She will accuse someone of the neglect and probably it will be the mother. If we could speak to this girl she could tell us more of the mother's preference for the younger sister. Such a preference would not astonish us, for the youngest child is almost always pampered. In later life it would not surprise us to find this girl disliking women younger than herself. Some people feel too old all through their lives, and many jealous women feel inferior towards members of their own sex who are younger than they.'¹

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, pp. 76-8.

From one brief sentence offered by a patient Adler was thus able to build up what is almost a finished portrait of a dethroned child and its future course through life. In a similar fashion, he would take a dream and deduce from it a wealth of significant evidence as to the dreamer's attitude. There exist only two methods of dream interpretation, the Freudian and the Adlerian. The former is causative, and sees the dream as pointing towards the past, towards a regression to instinct. The latter is purposive, and sees the dream as pointing towards the future, towards the problems of the morrow. Any other ways of interpreting a dream are only varieties or eclectic mixtures between these two diametrically opposite points of view.

'We dream, and in the morning we generally forget our dreams. Nothing is left. But is this true? Is nothing left at all? Something remains – we are left with the feelings our dreams have aroused. None of the pictures persist; no understanding of the dream is left; only the feelings remain behind. The dream is only the means, the instrument to stir up feelings. . . . We can conclude that we dream only if we are not sure of the solution of our problems, only if reality is pressing in on us even in our sleep and offering us difficulties. This is the task of the dream, to meet the difficulties with which we are confronted and to provide a solution. . . . We may stir up feelings in precisely the same way when we are awake. If someone meets a difficulty and wishes not to face it by using his common sense but to continue his style of life, then he will do everything he can to justify his style of life and to make it seem sufficient. His goal, for instance, may be to get money in an easy way, without struggling or working for it. Gambling occurs to him as a possibility. He knows that many people have lost their money through gambling, but he wishes to have an easy time, he wishes to enrich himself in an easy way. What will he do? He fills his mind with thoughts of the advantages of money. He pictures himself making money through speculation, buying a car, living in luxury, being known

by his fellows as a rich man. By these pictures he is stirring up feelings to push him forward. He turns away from common sense and begins to gamble.¹

The rule about dream interpretation therefore is that dreams are to be interpreted according to the mood they leave behind. They are attempts to reinforce the life style when this life style meets with some contradiction from objective fact or common sense. To this end, also, memories are brought up and enter into the composition of the dream. For memories, as we have seen, also serve to reinforce the life style by means of the warnings or encouragements which they offer. The dream reminds us of the past with a view to exhorting us on towards the future along the same lines. It is a rehearsal for action and is always to be thought of as prefaced by the question: 'How would it be if ...?' The fact that dreams do not speak a conceptual language but speak in terms of metaphor and imagery is to be explained in the same way as the fact that artists and poets make use of imagery. 'When Homer describes the army of the Greeks overrunning the fields like lions, he gives us a magnificent image. Do we believe that he really wishes to say exactly how these poor, dirty soldiers crept over the fields?'² The function of imagery is to persuade. By means of a vivid picture we are stimulated, and we overlook the fact that our soldiers are not really lions.

The difference in this respect between art and the dream does not lie in any different method used for our persuasion, but in a difference of aim. Art, like the dream, seeks to create a mood. Art, like the dream, seeks to stimulate us to action, although – and herein lies its distinction from mere propaganda – not to any specific action. Rather, art attempts to influence our whole adaptation to life, inspiring us, as Homer seeks to do by the example of his heroes, to admire such virtues as courage and nobility of mind. Art may be esteemed the highest training for social life, incul-

1. *Op. cit.*, pp. 99–100.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 103.

cating into us attitudes of value to civilization, and thus, however indirectly, improving the nature of our responses to specific situations. The dream, on the other hand, uses the same technique to reinforce our style of life against the logic of the social problems which confront us. 'Metaphors and symbols,' says Adler, 'can be abused. They can combine different meanings; they can say two things at the same time, one of which, perhaps, is quite false. Illogical consequences can be drawn from them. . . . Metaphors are used for beauty, for imagination and fantasy. We must insist, however, that the use of metaphors and symbols is always dangerous in the hands of an individual who has a mistaken style of life.'¹ 'The fact that dreams are designed to fool and to intoxicate us accounts for the fact that they are so rarely understood. If we understood our dreams, they could not deceive us.'²

In dreams there are no fixed symbols. If each human being is unique, then the symbols each uses will not have the same meaning for another person. 'It is impossible to interpret symbols and metaphors by formula, for the dream is a creation of the style of life.'³ Nevertheless, since there are typical human problems and typical ways of meeting them, we may often find resemblances. Different people may adopt the same posture to express hesitation, anger, or some other emotion, and different people may express themselves in rather similar fashion in their dreams. 'Most people have experienced dreams of flying. The key to these dreams, as to others, is the feelings they arouse. They leave behind them a mood of buoyancy and courage. They lead from below to above. They picture the overcoming of difficulties and the striving for the goal of superiority as easy. . . . There are very few people who have not experienced dreams of falling. This is very remarkable; it shows that the human mind is more often occupied with self-preservation and the

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 103.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

3. *Ibid.*

fear of defeat than with striving to overcome difficulties. . . . When people dream frequently that they are paralysed or that they fail to catch a train, the meaning is generally "I would be glad if the problem would pass by without any need of interference on my part. I must make a *détour*. I must arrive too late. I must let the train go by." Many people dream of examinations. Sometimes they are astonished to find themselves taking an examination so late in life, or in having to pass an examination in a subject on which they have already passed long ago. With some individuals the meaning would be, "You are not prepared to face the problem before you." With others it would mean "You have passed this examination before and you will pass the test before you at present."¹

'Recurrent dreams indicate an expression of the law of movement directed by the style of life when confronted by problems felt to be of similar nature. Short dreams show that a question has been answered concisely and decided upon quickly. Forgotten dreams, it may be conjectured, mean that their emotional tone is strong as opposed to the practical reason, which is just as strong. In order to find a better means of circumventing the latter, the intellectual material has to be evaporated so that only emotion and attitude remain. . . . Dreams about being improperly clothed followed by fright on that account can be mostly traced back to the fear of being detected in an imperfection. . . . When the dreamer plays the part of a spectator it is almost certain that in waking life he would willingly be satisfied with the role of onlooker.'² 'Very courageous people dream rarely, for they deal adequately with their situation during the daytime. Or the absence of dreams may be a sign that the patient has come to a point of rest in his neurosis and established a neurotic situation which he does not wish to change.'³

1. *Op. cit.*, pp. 107-8.

2. *Social Interest*, pp. 263-4.

3. *Problems of Neurosis*, p. 164.

'A boy of ten years of age was brought to the clinic. His school teacher complained that he was mean and vicious with other children. . . . He threw stones at a pregnant woman in the street and got into trouble. If he was ten years old he probably knew what pregnancy is. We can suspect that he does not like pregnancy and we must look to see if there is not another younger brother or sister whose arrival did not please him. . . . We learn that he is the elder of two children. His mother says that he loves his younger sister and is always good to her. This strains our credulity to the limit. . . . He sleeps in the dining room in a day-bed; his sister sleeps in a cot in her parents' room. Now, if we can identify ourselves with this boy, if we can have sympathy with him, the cot in the parents' room will bother us. The boy's health is very good. But when he was first placed on the bottle he vomited, and his vomiting spells continued until he was three years old. In all probability he had an imperfect stomach. He is now well fed and well nourished, but the interest in the stomach has persisted. He considers it a weak point. We can understand a little better now why he threw stones at a pregnant woman. We are now in a position to understand a dream he told when he came to the clinic. "I was a cowboy in the West," he said. "They sent me to Mexico and I had to fight my way through into the United States. When one Mexican came against me, I kicked him in the stomach." The feeling in the dream is "I am surrounded by enemies, I must struggle and fight." The boy's aim is to hit people at their weakest point. His dream and his actions show exactly the same style of life.'¹

Memories and dreams thus form an admirable cross-check upon the correctness of the psychiatrist's interpretation of a case. In the course of treatment, one finds that

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, pp. 111-14. Perhaps we might dwell a little more than Adler does in the text on the child's feeling of being excluded from the parents' affection. The dream says 'It is *as if* I were sent to Mexico and had to fight my way back, as if, to survive, I must use every weapon, even dirty tricks.' We might guess that such a boy is on the way to get himself expelled from school.

dreams change in their mood. A melancholic patient might dream of a very delightful little garden, but enclosed on all sides by a high wall. Later, she might dream of the same garden, but there would be a gate in the wall. At a further stage still, the gate might be open and people be seen leaving and entering, and finally the wall might be abolished altogether. One may thus gauge from dreams the response which a patient is making to analysis and use an explanation of them to encourage further progress.

3. Social Feeling

A genuine cure is one which not merely abolishes the symptoms, but which ensures that the patient will not fall back into neurosis when he meets with fresh difficulties later on. The patient must be re-equipped for life. He must acquire a method of interpreting his experience more serviceable than the one which led him to his illness. Nor is a cure even of the present illness possible unless one is able to offer the patient an interpretation of life which is superior to the one he already possesses. Merely to analyse a patient's mistakes while offering him no constructive proposals, merely to destroy his fiction and to leave him floundering in a worse state of uncertainty than before, is to do him no service. In such circumstances a patient would be justified if he refused to abandon his neurosis.

A psychiatrist, however, is not required to be a philosopher. It is not his office to propound a dogmatic creed which the patient must accept in order to be saved. The doctor's personal opinion upon the ultimate questions of life, upon the nature of reality, the meaning of the universe, the purpose of existence, the possibilities of survival, will be as open to question as the opinions held by his patient or by any other man. He must therefore avoid – as some psychologists, unfortunately, do not – posing before the patient as

a Messiah. It is the responsibility of each individual to decide for himself what attitude to adopt towards those questions before which all humanity stands in doubt, and the doctor should possess both the wisdom and the modesty to avoid shouldering this responsibility for another. Moreover, it is a golden rule that treatment should never interfere with a patient's already formed religious, political, or other convictions. A treatment must be valid for every type of person. It can accomplish no more in respect of beliefs than to put the patient in a better frame of mind to make a wise decision for himself.

This being said, what remains to offer the patient? There remains the 'technique' of interpreting each fresh experience as it comes along in a manner that will ensure a pragmatically correct assimilation of it. 'We do not meet in life with "Absolute Truth",' says Adler, 'but only with conditioned truths. There are as many meanings given to life as there are human beings and, as we have suggested, perhaps each meaning involves more or less of a mistake. No one possesses the absolute meaning of life, and we may say that any meaning which is at all serviceable cannot be called absolutely wrong. Among these varieties, however, we can distinguish some which answer better and some which answer worse; some where the mistake is small and some where the mistake is large. In this way we can obtain a "scientific meaning of life", a common measure of true meanings, a meaning which enables us to meet reality in so far as it concerns mankind. Here again we must remember that true means true for mankind, true for the purposes and aims of human beings.'¹

Neurosis is an error because it does not work pragmatically. The key to this error, in Adler's view, is the neurotic's interpretation of the environment as hostile to his existence. His behaviour suggests that he is fighting aggressively against it as if it constituted a threat to his existence while at the same time retreating before it as if he believed himself

to be inadequately prepared to meet it. We do not know as a proven fact whether the environment is friendly or hostile or merely neutral, but we do know from practical experience that only by regarding it as friendly do we achieve a working adaptation to it and only by regarding ourselves as adequate to our tasks do we succeed in overcoming them. The 'common measure of all true meanings, the meaning which enables us to meet reality in so far as it concerns mankind', is therefore one based upon friendliness and courage.

The neurotic's error is one that provokes in him a constant and a not unjustifiable dread for his survival. Believing that he must fight rather than co-operate with life, he finds himself more and more driven to the side, more and more excluded from men and their activities until he is ultimately able to live only under the protection which the social interest of others provides. To adapt is to co-operate. Those, whether individuals, peoples, or species, who do not co-operate, who bring no contribution, who work against rather than with life, suffer always the same fate. 'What has happened,' asks Adler, 'to those peoples who have contributed nothing to the general welfare? The answer is, they have disappeared completely. Nothing remains of them; they are quenched, body and soul. The earth has swallowed them. It has happened with them as it did with animal species which have become extinct because they were unable to get into harmony with cosmic facts. Surely there is a secret ordinance here. It is as though the questioning cosmos had given the command, "Away with you! You have not grasped the meaning of life. You cannot endure into the future!"'¹

This, as Adler says, is a cruel law. But it must be emphasized that it is a law. Co-operation, in the wide sense which Adler gives to the term, means to approach life with the willingness to learn from it and to work with it. If we take practical affairs alone, we see that this is the only valid

approach. The peasant cannot fight Nature, but must work according to her seasons and learn to manage her moods. The mechanic does not fight his machine, but enters into a working co-operation with its rhythm and its potentialities. No matter what aspect of life we take, whether it concerns our dealings with the inanimate, or our relations with other people, this law holds good. 'In the light which Darwin has shed we can understand the selection of all the species that turn to advantage the demands of the external world. . . . We have to start from this path of development, of continuous, active adaptation to the demands of the external world if we wish to understand in what direction life proceeds and moves.'¹

As individuals, we do not adapt to nature directly but through society. 'If the conditions of our life are determined in the first place by cosmic influences, they are also further conditioned by the social and communal life of human beings, and by the laws and regulations which arise spontaneously from the communal life. The communal need regulates all relationships between men. The communal life of man antedates the individual life of man. In the history of human civilization no form of life whose foundations are not laid communally can be found. No human being ever appeared except in a community of human beings. This is very easily explained. The whole animal kingdom demonstrates the fundamental law that species whose members are incapable of facing the battle for self-preservation gather new strength through herd-life.'²

'All human judgements of value and success are founded in the end upon co-operation; this is the great shared commonplace of the human race. All that we ask of conduct, of ideals, of goals, of actions, of traits of character is that they should serve towards our human co-operation. We shall never find a man who is completely devoid of social feeling. The neurotic and the criminal also know this open secret;

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 270.

2. *Understanding Human Nature*, p. 28.

we can see their knowledge in the pains they take to justify their style of life and to throw responsibility elsewhere.¹ It is the community alone which gives meaning to the life of the individual. For an isolated life, the very question of 'meaning' could not arise. 'It is here that we find the common measure of all mistaken "meanings of life" and the common measure of all true "meanings of life"'. All failures – neurotics, psychotics, criminals, drunkards, problem children, suicides, perverts, and prostitutes – give to life a private meaning; no one else is benefited by the achievement of their aims and their interest stops short at their own persons. . . . Murderers have confessed to a feeling of power when they held a bottle of poison in their hands, but clearly they were confirming their importance only to themselves; to the rest of us the possession of a bottle of poison cannot seem to give them superior worth. A private meaning is in fact no meaning at all. Meaning is only possible in communication. A word which meant something to one person only would really be meaningless. It is the same with our actions; their only meaning is their meaning for others.'²

It is therefore not difficult to understand why it is that the neurotic's retreat from social co-operation develops always in the direction of the irrational, of the illogical, of the meaningless. 'Speech would be absolutely unnecessary to an individual organism living alone. Speech is justified only in a community; it is a product of communal life, a bond between the individuals of the community. . . . Logical thinking is only possible with the premise of speech, which gives the possibility of building up concepts and of understanding differences in values; the fashioning of concepts is not an individual matter, but concerns all society.'³ Were the neurotic to proceed far enough in the direction he has chosen, he would end, as in the case of some of the insane,

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 69.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 8.

3. *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

entirely divorced not only from every activity but from every thought connecting him with his kind.

The interpretation which we give to life must therefore be a social interpretation, must be in accordance with reason, logic, and common sense, for only in the fact that our interpretation is valid for others as well as for ourselves can it be considered an interpretation at all. Truth is truth for a number, and the greatest truths are those which have been found valid for all men for all time. Likewise acts must be useful acts, contributing to the welfare of others and connecting us with others. The common feature in every childish bad habit or neurotic symptom is that such bad habit or symptom is socially useless.

'Social feeling is not perhaps an inherited instinct,' says Adler, 'but the potentiality for social feeling is inherited.'¹ It is 'the gift of Evolution', a capacity for association which evolution has developed in animals unable to live singly by their own strength. Like all our other potentialities, it has to be trained before it becomes effective. In the neurotic, this training has been consistently in the wrong direction in much the same way as the sexual potentialities of the pervert have been trained against the type of sex which would connect him with others. We may see this counter-training not only in the creation of 'private meanings' and in the pursuit of goals and forms of behaviour which have no social application, but even in such trivial matters as the use of the eyes. For the eyes are more than an organ of sight, they are an organ of communication with others. 'Often when we see a child who has trained towards interest in himself, we find that he has a hang-dog or vacant look in his face; and we can see something of the same look in the faces of criminals and the insane. They are not using their eyes to connect with others. They are not seeing in the same way. Sometimes such children and adults will not even look at their fellow-beings; they turn their eyes away and look elsewhere.'²

The strength of the demand which society exercises upon

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 261.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 255.

us to co-operate is to be measured by the energy and ingenuity which the neurotic is forced to put into this counter-training. His waking hours must be constantly occupied with the sole problem of not co-operating, and his nights will be filled with dreams designed to reinforce this attitude. The strength of the demand is also to be seen in the fact that the neurotic is so frequently compelled to take a circuitous route to his goal, to hide his aggression beneath traits of benevolence, while, even to himself, he will seldom admit that he is not acting for the best. If his actions do not turn out for the best, this must always be because of the unkindness or mistakes of others, never because he was governed by ill-natured impulses. 'We can never find anyone who could truly say "I am not interested in others"'. He may act this way – he may act as if he were not interested in the world – but he cannot justify himself. Rather does he claim to be interested in others, in order to hide his lack of social adjustment. This is mute testimony to the universality of the social feeling.¹

Should the neurotic achieve total disconnexion with the aims of society, there would be no element in him to which to appeal and a cure would become impossible. But in the generality of cases the counter-training is not so successful and the social feeling still exists. The neurotic genuinely desires to co-operate, but he is prevented from doing so by his egocentric goal. He feels intensely his isolation from others, but he does not see how to break through the barriers created by his interest in himself. Neurotics have often a highly developed social feeling which only requires to be freed. Their unhappiness is the result of the conflict between this social feeling and their anti-social training, and unhappiness is therefore the most favourable sign for prognosis. Happiness and unhappiness are only terms to describe the individual's nearness or distance from the community, and such emotions would be without purpose in a completely isolated psychic life.

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 216.

The task of the psychiatrist is therefore far more than to analyse the patient's mistakes. This preliminary work is indeed necessary in order to give the patient insight into his situation and to win from him not merely an intellectual acknowledgement but a profound conviction of where he has gone wrong. But the more difficult, constructive part of the psychiatrist's work is to act as a link between the patient and the society with which he has lost contact. 'The task of the physician or psychologist is to give the patient the experience of contact with a fellow-man, and then to enable him to transfer this awakened social feeling to others.'¹ Never, of course, is this to be attempted by any formalistic method. An Adlerian analysis does not develop by set stages, but from the very beginning and at every subsequent moment the analyst is not only learning but curing. He must not only formulate tactfully and correctly the questions necessary if he is to acquire information of the patient's trouble, but he must be equally ready with the right and encouraging answer to all riddles. He has to gauge quickly the extent of the patient's inferiority, activity, and social interest and to give him only as much insight into his condition as he can assimilate at the time. He must never demolish the inconsistencies of the patient's style of life without at the same time building up fresh prospects. A patient's ability to recognize the mistakes in his life style depends, not merely upon logic, but upon the growth of new courage to accept them. At each interview he must leave not only with some partial new insight into his mistakes, but with an additional feeling of courage and a better understanding of how, by means of a more friendly interpretation of experience, he will be able to avoid making others in the future.

Social feeling is perhaps the most difficult concept in Adler's psychology to grasp correctly. Its essence is missed if it is taken to be either a philosophy or a morality. 'If anyone talks to me of morality,' Adler once remarked, 'I look to see if perchance his hand is not in my pocket.' Psychology

is not concerned to condemn and to moralize any more than to philosophize; its aim is strictly therapeutic. Social feeling, from this point of view, is a basic assumption about life which a person must possess if he is to make a correct adaptation and retain his psychic good health. In practice it shows itself at every step, in every choice he makes, in whether his first preference is for a friendly rather than for a hostile interpretation of the words or actions which another uses towards him, or in whether his natural manner of meeting tasks and problems is a useful rather than a useless one. It shows itself in the degree of his sympathy with and understanding of people, in his aesthetic appreciation, in his fondness for nature, in his intellectual curiosity, in his care for the community's material and spiritual welfare, and in his interest in all that pertains to mankind.

In treatment it is always easier to awaken the patient's courage than his social feeling. But courage is of no use unless it can be socially directed. 'Once I was called to do what I could for a girl with dementia praecox. She had suffered from this condition for eight years and for the last two years had been in an asylum. She barked like a dog, spat, tore her clothes and tried to eat her handkerchief. We can see how far she had turned away from interest in human beings. She wanted to play the role of a dog and we can understand this. She felt that her mother had treated her as a dog; and perhaps she was saying, "The more I see of human beings, the more I should like to be a dog." I spoke to her on eight successive days and she did not answer a word. I continued to speak to her and after thirty days she began to talk in a confused and unintelligible way. I was a friend to her and she was encouraged. But if a patient of this type is encouraged he does not know what to do with his courage. His resistance against his fellow-men is still very strong. We can predict the conduct he will try when his courage comes back to some degree and he still does not wish to be co-operative. He is like a problem child; he will try to be a nuisance, he will break anything he can lay

hands on or he will hit the attendant. When I next spoke to this girl she hit me. I had to consider what I should do. The only answer that would surprise her would be to put up no resistance. You can imagine the girl – she was not a girl of great physical strength. I let her hit me, and looked friendly. This she did not expect; it took away every challenge from her. She still did not know what to do with her awakened courage. She broke my window and cut her hand on the glass. I did not reproach her but bandaged her hand. . . . After this, the girl recovered. I still see her from time to time and she has remained in good health for ten years. She earns her own living, is reconciled to her fellows, and no one who saw her would ever believe that she had suffered from insanity.’¹

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, pp. 256–7.

CHAPTER 6 : Adler on Education

1. The Task of Parenthood

The side of Adler's work nearest his heart was all that concerned the upbringing of children, for 'in our children lies the future of our race'. A very large part of his time was given up to presenting his views to parents, teachers, and welfare workers, and it is among these that the influence of Individual Psychology has been particularly evident. Adler was, above all else, the greatest modern authority on education. The simplicity with which he managed to present his teaching and its universal applicability have made it acceptable both in the home and in the school, and, far more than is consciously realized, his views have come to permeate our thought-habits. On such questions as pampering, family rivalry, too authoritarian education, parents may often be found acting along his lines even though they may not know the source of their wisdom.

Individual Psychology guards itself against presenting a set of hard and fast rules for education. No set of instructions could, in its view, cover the subtleties of the task, and no formulas can compensate for an absence of intuition in the parents. Rules and formulas are desired only by persons who fear to rely upon themselves. Individual Psychology offers only an attitude to adopt towards children, not a list of things to be done on every occasion.

'It is around the principle of social feeling that Individual Psychology has developed its pedagogical technique. Social feeling is the crucial and deciding factor in normal development. Every disturbance which results in a lessening of the social or communal feeling has a tremendously harmful

effect on the mental growth of the child. Social feeling is the barometer of the child's normality.¹ The parents who are convinced of the truth of these words will understand also that the children are a valuable discipline for themselves. They have to maintain an atmosphere of cheerfulness and optimism and of consideration for the child's many difficulties, and cannot afford to appear moody, anxious-minded, gloomy, or irritable. It is important to realize at the outset that a child is educated by the impact made upon his questing and highly-sensitive mind by the nature of the whole environment. The family is, for him, the world. He breathes it in in its totality, and his first interpretation of life will be coloured by his feeling for its general atmosphere. He will feel the influence not only of his mother's relationship with himself, but also of her friendly or hostile relationship with the father, with the other children, with friends, relations, and visitors. His right development depends greatly upon her right attitude to all the problems of life. If she is an anxious person he also will be likely to consider the world a dangerous place. If the atmosphere is heavy with domestic quarrel, he may sense it as an insecurity, even though open quarrels are kept – as they ought to be – out of his sight. The fact that adults put on a different face when he is present may be perceived by him and may cause him bewilderment and fear. The first and foremost task of the parents is to attain to real domestic harmony. They should put in the forefront of their thoughts the creation of the home as a miniature universe of their own modelling to serve as an environment for the child.

The most important period for educating a child is during his first five years, before the setting of the life style. Education is thus primarily in the hands of the mother, and where the mother fails in her task, the teacher and the psychologist, who come so much later in the child's life, can be at most an ameliorating influence. 'The mother', wrote Adler, 'has the enormous advantage of the physical and psychic rela-

tionship; she is the greatest experience of love and fellowship that the child will ever have. Her duty is mentally to relate the growing child to herself, nourishing the child's growing consciousness with true and normal conceptions of society, of work and of love. In this way she gradually transforms the child's love for her and dependence upon her into a benevolent, responsible attitude towards society and the whole environment. This is the twofold function of motherhood, to give the child the completest possible experience of human fellowship and then to widen it into a life-attitude towards others.¹

'Love is the most important means to education. Education is possible only by virtue of the child's love and agreement. We see again and again how the child looks to the person whom he loves and seeks to imitate that person's words, gestures and attitudes. This love should not be lightly prized, for it is the surest educational support.'² The mother should therefore use all her skill to win the child's love and co-operation. 'She can be skilful,' says Adler, 'only if she is interested in her child and occupied in securing his welfare. In all her activities we can see her attitude. Whenever she takes the baby up, carries him, speaks to him, bathes him, feeds him, she has opportunities to connect him with herself. If she is not trained in her tasks or not interested in them, she will be clumsy and the baby will resist. If she has never learned to bathe a child he will find bathing an unpleasant experience. Instead of making a connexion with him, he will try to get rid of her. . . . On every occasion she is providing an opportunity for the child to like or to dislike her, to co-operate or to reject co-operation.

'The preparation for motherhood begins very early in life. . . . It is never advisable to educate boys and girls as if they had the same tasks ahead of them. If we are to have skilful mothers, girls must be educated for motherhood, and educated in such a way that they like the prospect of being

1. *Problems of Neurosis*, p. 20.

2. *Heilen und Bilden*, p. 4.

a mother, consider it a creative activity, and are not disappointed in their role when they face it in later life. . . . The whole of human society is bound up with the attitude of women to motherhood. Almost everywhere the woman's part in life is undervalued and treated as secondary.¹ From this dissatisfaction with her social status there may spring, as we noticed in earlier chapters, an opposite reaction in some women – an exaggeration of her maternal function and an under-valuation of other aspects of her feminine rôle. This also has its dangers. 'Where one problem is over-stressed, all other problems suffer. . . . A mother is related with her children, with her husband and with the whole social life around her. These three ties must be given equal attention. . . . If a mother considers only her tie with her children, she will be unable to avoid pampering and spoiling them. She will make it hard for them to develop independence and the ability to co-operate with others. After she has succeeded in connecting the child with herself, her next task is to spread his interest towards the father, and this task will prove almost impossible if she is not interested in the father. She must turn the child's interest also to the social life around him, to other children of the family, to friends, relations and fellow human beings in general.'²

Perhaps the largest amount of the difficulties encountered in upbringing may be ascribed, in the last resort, to the mother's own too narrow social interests. She regards the child as her possession, her achievement, her claim to recognition. The child, noticing her preoccupation with his person, may well conclude, 'My mother belongs to me and to nobody else.' He does not learn to share her. When he has to share her, when he sees her attention diverted towards the husband or towards the other children, his jealousy is awakened. 'When a child whose mother has bound him only to herself is placed in a situation where he is no longer

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 120.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 125.

connected with her, trouble begins. When he goes to school, for example, or plays with children in the park, his goal will always be to remain connected with his mother. Whenever he is separated from her he will resent it. He wishes always to drag his mother along with him, to occupy her thoughts and to make her attentive to him. . . . He may weep or fall sick at any reverse, to show how much he needs to be looked after. On the other hand he may have outbursts of temper; he may be disobedient and fight with his mother in order to be noticed.¹

At this stage we may already say that the child is pampered. He will become anxious whenever the mother is absent, then start to use his anxiety as a means to hold her by night as well as by day. 'This use of anxiety is so obvious that we should be very surprised to hear of a pampered child who never made trouble during the night. The repertory of tricks to attract attention is very large. Some children will find the bedclothes uncomfortable or call for glasses of water. Others will be afraid of burglars or wild animals. Some are unable to go to sleep unless their parents sit by their bedside. Some dream; some fall out of bed, and some wet their bed. One pampered child whom I treated seemed to give no trouble at all at night. Her mother said that she slept soundly without dreaming or waking up and caused no trouble at all. It was only during the day that she made trouble. This was very surprising. I suggested all the symptoms which could serve to attract the attention of the mother and draw her closer; this girl showed none of them. At last the explanation occurred to me. "Where does she sleep?" I asked the mother. "In my bed," she replied.'²

'The father's influence on his children is so important that many of them look on him throughout their lives either as their ideal or as their greatest enemy. . . . The task of the father can be summed up in a few words. He must prove himself a good fellow-man to his wife, to his children and to society. . . . He should not forget that the woman's part in

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 128.

2. *Op. cit.*, pp. 128-9.

the creation of family life can never be surpassed. It is not his part to dethrone the mother, but to work with her. Especially with regard to money, he should never make it appear that he gives and the others receive. In a good marriage the fact that the money comes through him is only a result of the division of labour in the family. . . . There should be no ruler in the family and every occasion for feelings of inequality should be avoided. . . . It is unfortunately frequent that the father of the family is given the task of punishing the children. . . . If the mother tells her children, "You wait till father comes home", she is preparing them to regard men as the final authorities and the real powers in life. . . .'¹

'It is of the utmost importance that neither the father nor the mother should show any favouritism among the children. The danger of favouritism can hardly be too dramatically put. Almost every discouragement in childhood springs from the feeling that someone else is preferred. . . . Sometimes one of the children develops quicker or in a more likeable way than the others and it is difficult not to show more liking for this child. Parents should be experienced enough and skilful enough to avoid showing any such preferences. . . . Let us compare the growth of children with the growth of young trees. If a group of trees are growing up together, each one of them is really in a quite different situation. If one grows faster, because it is more favoured by the sun or the soil, its development influences the growth of all the others. It overshadows them; its roots stretch out and take away their nourishment. The others are dwarfed and stunted. The same is true of a family in which one member is too prominent.'²

Another, and very usual, form of mistake is inconsistency in education. This may happen when the father and mother are not in accord. If the mother rebukes the child the father may then remonstrate with her severity, or secretly go to comfort the child with a sweet. It is a temptation to both

1. *Op. cit.*, pp. 140-1.

2. *Op. cit.*, pp. 142-3.

parties, should they be in conflict, to use the child as a foil and to wish to win him over against the opposite partner. The child has then the opportunity to make capital out of their differences and to start appealing from one to another. Even if a real injustice has been done by one parent it cannot be set right by the action of the other. It is well if the one who committed the injustice will acknowledge the fact, but otherwise the matter is best left, since any treatment is to be preferred to inconsistent treatment.

Inconsistency may sometimes arise if the parent, perhaps the mother, is unsure of her power to manage the children, and resorts first to one policy and then to another. As soon as difficulties occur, her attitude will sway from side to side and the application of different principles will begin to bewilder the child. He will, again, soon learn how to play upon her hesitations, and will seek to gain further advantages by a constant change of tactics. By consistency is meant a firm, unruffled adherence to the chosen line, which the child is unable to change whatever tactics he employs. It is natural that as a child grows up he will be constantly seeking to test the limits of his power, and the parents are, in a certain sense, his legitimate antagonists. An education where the parents do not exhibit moral authority, where they resort to threats which are not carried out, alternating with promises, cajolery, and emotional appeals to the child's 'love', weakens his confidence and trust in his elders. It is the nature of children to be uncertain and dependent and they rest upon the self-assurance of their parents. They require to feel that their parents know their aim and they should not be burdened with making too many decisions themselves.

Consistency, of course, must not be confused with stubbornness. It is by no means necessary to appear infallible before the child. It is generally the timid parent who both makes mistakes owing to her alternating attitude and is afraid of admitting these mistakes when made, lest her precarious authority should suffer further diminution. Nor does consistency preclude flexibility. As a child grows up he be-

comes a constant test of the parents' own capacity for adaptation. Although routine must be maintained, since routine adds stability to his world, the routine will have to change with his development. His growing powers will otherwise bring him into conflict with restrictions which he had previously accepted without complaint. The parents need to see the matter from the child's angle and their wise relinquishment of a part of their authority at the right time will avoid many a fruitless battle for power.

'Punishment, especially corporal punishment, is always harmful to children. Any teaching which cannot be given in friendship is wrong teaching.'¹ 'When corporal punishment is disappearing from the courts of justice it must be considered a barbarity to beat children. . . . To shut them up alone appears to us as barbaric as blows, and we cannot forego the suspicion that punishment of this character may be as significant to the child as the first imprisonment of a young offender.'² Harsh words, mockery, or anything that harms the child's sense of prestige can never bring good educational results. While it is impossible to dispense with correction, it must take a form which serves to show the child his mistake and concentrates his attention upon taking a better way to his goal. Often persons who have been brought up in a harsh way themselves think that their children should not be spared anything which they had to suffer. 'Such a view, such thoughts, do not spring from bad intentions. They simply reflect the mentality of those who were harshly brought up. Such persons can produce any number of good reasons and maxims, as, for example, "Spare the rod and spoil the child." And they give us endless proofs and examples, which do not quite convince us in as much as the futility of a rigid, authoritative education is proved by the simple fact that it estranges the child from his educator.'³

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 135.

2. *Heilen und Bilden*, p. 4.

3. *Education of Children*, p. 15.

When Adler was asked to what ideal one should bring up a child, he answered, 'Make your child independent.' From the cradle onwards, confidence in the parents' love and in their reliability form the basis upon which he can build his own courageous attitude. He must then have freedom to venture forth on his own initiative, to learn, and to make mistakes. While his real needs must receive proper attention, as far as possible he should not be waited upon, and the mother needs patience not to interfere when he is struggling to manipulate objects or to dress himself. Nor should the mother be perpetually warning him of the danger of staircases and windows from which he might fall or of table-tops against which he might bump his head. Naturally, he must be quietly distracted from any activity that might prove really dangerous, but it is not well to exaggerate in his mind the idea of danger. If he is hurt, the best sympathy is the practical remedy. The objects of the outer world have an impersonality which guarantees that the difficulties he encounters in manipulating them or the knocks which he receives from them will not, of themselves, give him a feeling of inferiority. Pampering starts when the mother perpetually interferes with the child's independence and freedom to experiment along his own lines. He then gives up his efforts, seeing that she is stronger and more competent, waits for her to act and to do things for him, and the vicious circle begins. The less he trains, the more inferior he feels, and the more he must emphasize his helplessness in order to gain the compensation of thus dominating others.

Pampering generally leads at some time or other to what we have called inconsistent education. There comes a time when the parents realize that the child clings too closely, that he demands to be waited upon, that, in fact, he is growing spoiled. They generally attempt to correct the original error by committing the opposite one, that of severity. This abrupt withdrawal of love and support from a child already too dependent will only deepen his dis-

couragement. He will not understand why he is losing the love previously lavished on him, and will try every means to regain it. He will even court severity and scolding provided that he can in this way keep his parents' attention focussed upon him. There will thus develop between parent and child an unceasing battle for power which it is impossible for the parent ever to win. 'One ought never to engage in battle with a child,' said Adler, 'for the simple reason that he is the stronger. A child has no responsibility. The person who takes the responsibility is never the strongest.'¹ Even if the parent were to succeed in thoroughly intimidating the child, the victory would only be a Pyrrhic one. Such is the case, recounted by Adler, of a boy who developed the habit of throwing his parents' possessions out of the window. This trick was visited by such sharp punishment that the boy desisted. But instead he developed a compulsive dread lest he might be tempted to throw something out of the window. By means of this dread he occupied his parents just as thoroughly and caused them as much anxiety as before, with the additional advantage that his over-conscientiousness could not reasonably be punished.

Children will prove themselves almost unbelievably clever at striking at their parents' weakest point. If the parent is scrupulously tidy, the child will be untidy. If the parent is seen to be anxious for him to eat, he will lose his appetite. If the parent too clearly wishes him to shine in society he will perhaps develop a stammer. The faults in children generally parody some insistence upon an ideal which the educator holds in special value. 'A very well known sociologist in Germany has discovered that a surprising proportion of criminals spring from families which are occupied in the suppression of crime, from the families of judges, policemen or prison warders. Often the children of teachers are obstinately backward. In my own experience I have often found this true, and I have found also a surprising number of neurotic children among the children

1. *Die Seele des Schwererziehbaren Schulkindes*, Ch. 22.

of doctors and of delinquent children among the children of ministers of religion.¹ The fact that the child so often chooses the chink in the parent's armour as his point of attack may cause the parent to lose his objectivity and to become angry. Parents in such cases often prophesy a bad ending for the child, tell him that he is stupid, or will grow up to be a good-for-nothing. 'There are few children who can bear to hear so scathing a reproach without being wounded by it. . . . Such a stupid prophecy makes the situation infinitely worse, since it increases the child's cowardice. One should do just the opposite; inspire the child with optimism. . . . It must never be believed that we can influence a child really to improve his conduct by humiliating or shaming him, even though we sometimes see that children who are afraid of being laughed at seem to change their behaviour.'² One of the universal methods by which a child can be most humiliated and least helped is to hold up another member of the family as an example, to ask, 'Why cannot you be good like your brother?'

In some situations it is possible to err in the opposite direction – that of over-valuing the child's achievements. This can happen with parents who are too ambitious for their children. They wish the child to compensate for their own deficiencies, to be a model of perfection about whom they can boast to the neighbours, or to take a better place in the world than they themselves have done. They therefore force the child forward with praises and encouragement, exaggerate his every accomplishment, and tremble at every sign of a fault. The child is overburdened by the parents' too great expectations, is set goals beyond his capacities, and learns to over-value success. 'The expectations which the families have of such children are very keenly felt by the children themselves. They go about fulfilling every task that is set them with excitement and nervousness because they have always before their eyes the vision of surpassing all

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 38.

2. *Education of Children*, pp. 81–3.

others, of "being a shining light".¹ Should such children be surpassed, they will be plunged into discouragement, for they know that their parents' good opinion of them depends solely upon their continual success. Here, again, the fundamental educational fault springs from the parents' lack of real social interest, their egoistic attitude that the child is there to do them credit.

Whenever praise is bestowed, care must be taken that it is bestowed upon the accomplishment and not upon the child. To tell a child that he is clever, industrious, pretty and so on turns his attention inwards upon his own personality. He may be momentarily stimulated by the praise, but his attempts will flag again as soon as attention is diverted. It is the task itself that should be regarded as well or badly performed. Rewards for the task should likewise be avoided; the child works then only for the reward. Rewards and punishments are alike in this respect, that both veil from the child the natural consequences of his acts. How frequently, for instance, may we not see a child who has disobediently run across the street in front of the traffic being punished by its frightened mother. Feelings of humiliation and resentment at the punishment will at once take the place of the objective lesson he would otherwise have learned from his narrow escape.

The only way of dealing with an already difficult child is to seek to transform him from an antagonist into an ally. His activity must be directed towards the useful side of life. He must be given small tasks at which he can easily succeed, and success should be used to demonstrate to him that he could succeed also in bigger things. If he can be encouraged to help the parents in small ways he may come to realize that this method of making himself valued is superior to that of winning battles of prestige. No child wants to be naughty if he could win his ends by being good. He is entangled in the battle with the parents and does not see a means of yielding without humiliation. Therefore the

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 44.

parents, if they are sympathetic, will seek round for means to help him to yield gracefully. Perhaps they will offer him a little prestige in another direction, so long as this is not understood by the child as a form of bargain. One method found useful is deliberately to misinterpret a situation. The parent can assume that what was an act of wilful naughtiness was only a mistake and refuse to credit the child with bad intentions. The child thus receives an indirect assurance of the parents' friendly attitude. Where the child makes difficulty over his functions, refuses to eat, or rebels against going to bed, it is better to wait until his own hunger or tiredness come to the parents' aid. The child will cease his obstinacy when he learns that obstinacy brings him no advantage.

Parents should be on their guard against whatever may constitute a test situation for the child. In the manner in which a child faces his situation they will be able to judge whether their form of education has been successful. Illnesses often result in the child being pampered and he may become fractious on recovery. The birth of other children is one of the most important tests. Most parents are now aware that it is advisable to prepare the child's mind for the event, but they are often disappointed to find that their preparation has been of little avail. The reason is that if the child has been previously pampered it will be next to impossible for him to form in advance a true picture of the new situation. Preparation in words may help, but the only true preparation is his previous right training. Where jealousy becomes obvious, moral exhortation is to be avoided. Parents may sometimes feel shocked at manifestations of hatred and ask in moral tones, 'But don't you love your little brother?' This not only may shame the child, but it also puts undue emphasis upon the use of the emotions. A child who is always being asked, 'Do you love Mummy?' 'Don't you love your brother?' realizes that the giving or withholding of love can be a handy weapon.

'A husband,' said Adler, 'should not show his affection

for his wife too strikingly before the children. It is true that the love of a husband and wife is not to be compared with their love for their children. They are quite different things and neither can diminish the other. But sometimes children feel, if their parents are too expressive in their affection for one another, that their own place is narrowed. They grow jealous and wish to make dissensions. The sexual partnership should not be taken with so little seriousness. So, too, in giving explanation of sexual matters, the father with the boys and the mother with the girls, they should be careful not to volunteer information, but to explain only so much as the child wishes to know and can understand at his stage of development. I believe that in our time there is a tendency to explain to children far more than they can grasp properly and to raise interests and feelings for which they are not prepared. In this way sexual matters are minimized and treated as if they were a bagatelle. The fashion is not much better than the old fashion of being dishonest with children and concealing all sexual information from them. It is best to understand what the child wishes to know and to answer the problem which he himself is considering; not to force on him what, from our own standards, we think should be known to everybody. We must preserve his trust and his feeling that we are co-operating with him and interested in helping him to find solutions for his problems; and if we do this we cannot go far wrong. Incidentally, the fear of some parents that their children will hear injurious sex explanations from their fellow-children has little justification. A child whose training in co-operation and independence has been good will never suffer from the talk of his friends; and very often children are more delicate in these matters than their elders. A 'street explanation' never harmed a child who was not already prepared to take a mistaken view.¹

Children should, however, be told as early as possible, say at the age of three or four, that sex cannot be changed, that boys grow up to be men and girls to be women.

1. *What Life should Mean to You*, pp. 139-40.

Differences in the type of clothing worn by each sex also help to guard against that 'hermaphroditic uncertainty' of which Adler spoke and which may lead to sexual curiosity and experiment. If evidence of sexual precocity is noticed it should be treated no differently from the manner in which other bad habits are treated. A child will often play with himself because he finds that it causes the parents to watch him with anxiety. Like other bad habits, erotic activities are a sign of pampering and of interest too closely focussed on the self. The remedy is again to direct the child's interest outwards into useful channels.

Much can be learned of a child's style of life by noting his attitude to play. A dependent child will not play easily when the parents are out of the room and will tend to leave things incomplete for others to finish. An over-ambitious child will not join well in the games of other children. He may wish to be always the leader or be unable to bear any position of subservience, such as being the horse when another child is the driver. Or else he will remain seclusive and shy, unwilling to trust himself with others. 'The preparation for the future can be seen in every game. The manner in which a child approaches a game, his choice and the importance which he places upon it, indicate his attitude and his relationship with his fellowmen. Whether he is friendly or hostile, and particularly whether he has a tendency to be a ruler, is evident in his play.'¹

Children need toys to divert interest from themselves as soon as they learn to manage their limbs. Toys should be added to gradually as the child exhausts the possibilities of each, and they should differ from one another in the kind of activity which they demand of him. He should be shown the possibilities of those for which he exhibits least interest, so that his play attains an all-round activity. 'Games in which a child can work and build up things are more worthwhile than ready-made or finished toys.'² Where

1. *Understanding Human Nature*, p. 92.

2. *Education of Children*, p. 201.

possible, the household should include animals, for 'proper comradeship with animals may be regarded as a preparatory stage for social co-operation with human beings.'¹ Finally, as the child grows older, the presence of other children is indispensable to develop the co-operative spirit inherent in games. Nursery schools at an early age are therefore indicated for only children or wherever the home life is at all restricted.

2. *The Role of the Teacher*

'We cannot, in our present society, hope to reach all the parents and help them to avoid mistakes,' said Adler. 'The parents who most need advice are the parents who never come for it. We can hope, however, to reach all the teachers and, through them, all the children.'² Teachers are the natural intermediaries between Individual Psychology and the lay public. They have a trained understanding of the problems with which Individual Psychology is concerned, and a more objective view of the child than the parents can possess. 'We need the most intimate co-operation between the psychiatrist and the teacher. The teacher must know everything the psychiatrist knows, so that after discussing the child's problem he can proceed on his own without further help. If any unexpected problem turns up, he should understand what to do, just as the psychiatrist would if he were present.'³ 'No one can know the minds of children so well as a teacher who lives with them and works with them. He sees so many types of children and, if he is skilful, establishes a connexion with each of them. It rests with him whether the mistakes a child has made in family life shall continue or be corrected. Like the mother, he is the guar-

1. *Education of Children*, p. 201.

2. *What Life should Mean to You*, p. 176.

3. *Op. cit.*, p. 159.

dian of the future of mankind, and the service he can render is incalculable.’¹

Just as Individual Psychology does not offer to the mother any rigid prescriptions for upbringing, so it does not offer the teacher any special method or fancy scheme of its own devising. It suggests only an attitude to the problems which confront the teacher. Its function is always one simply of guidance. But, for the very reason that Individual Psychology guards itself against programmes and formulas, the guidance which it has to offer becomes universally applicable. Its suggestions can be used by teachers in high school or kindergarten, in State schools or private schools, and under any system, co-educational or other. Nor do its views conflict with any religious or secular ideals – save, perhaps, with those of dictatorially governed States.

While the mother is chiefly concerned with the handling of the individual child, the problem of the teacher centres more upon the handling of the children collectively. His sphere of activity is the class. We are therefore faced at the outset with the question of what attitude to adopt to the class. We ask firstly, ‘Is the class simply a place where instruction is imparted or can it serve some further educational purpose?’ and, secondly, ‘Is the class to be regarded as a collection of individual children or as a corporate body?’ To these questions Individual Psychology would answer that, over and above its purpose of imparting instruction, the class can have the purpose of educating the child in the art of living with his fellows, that it is essentially a miniature society, a corporate body. ‘We no longer wish to train children only to make money or to take a position in the industrial system. We want fellow-men. We want equal, independent and responsible collaboration in the common work of culture.’²

‘Under our present system we generally find that when the children first come to school they are more prepared for competition than for co-operation; and the training in

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 181.

2. *Op. cit.*, p. 157.

competition continues throughout their schooldays. This is a disaster for the child; and it is hardly less of a disaster if he goes ahead and strains to beat the other children than if he falls behind and gives up the struggle. In both cases he will be primarily interested in himself. It will not be his aim to contribute and help, but to secure what he can for himself. As the family should be a unit, with each member an equal part of the whole, so, too, should the class. When they are trained in this way, children are really interested in one another and enjoy co-operation. I have seen many "difficult" children whose attitude was entirely changed through the interest and co-operation of their fellow-children.¹

If the teacher is to enlist this co-operation, he needs all the arts and strategy of the politician for his success. He is the leader who sets the tone of the miniature community. He will need, at the outset, devices for dealing with trouble-makers. Adler did not consider it realistic to suppose that punishment can be avoided altogether. But punishment undoubtedly becomes less necessary to the extent that a co-operative spirit can be established. Where the teacher wields only personal authority unsupported by the majority of the class, each child's mischief is directed against him personally, and any child who can 'score off' teacher can be certain of the applause of the rest. The strategy of the teacher will therefore be to turn the mischief from an offence against his personal authority into an offence against the class as a whole. A class which is on the side of the teacher becomes impatient of trouble-makers. If, nevertheless, punishment becomes necessary, it should not seem to be dictated by the spite of the teacher against the offender. The class should therefore be consulted as to whether punishment is deserved and, if so, what measures would be appropriate. In such cases it is generally found that the class favours a far too savage penalty, so that the teacher is put in the happy position of mediating between the culprit and the vengeance of the majority. Discipline

along these lines is not only far easier to maintain but becomes an object lesson to the child, who finds that bad behaviour is an injury to the whole community.

If the class is to be co-operative, it must see a goal that interests it. A goal cannot be imposed simply by the will of the teacher, but can only be attained if some measure of self-direction be allowed to the class. 'One frequent suggestion for increasing the unity and co-operation of a class is to make the children self-governing; but in such attempts I think that we must go carefully, under the guidance of a teacher, and assuring ourselves that the children are rightly prepared. Otherwise we shall find that the children are not very serious about their self-government; they look on it as a kind of game. In consequence, they are much stricter and severer than a teacher would be; or they use their meetings to gain a personal advantage, to air quarrels, to score off one another or to achieve a position of superiority. In the beginning, therefore, it is necessary that the teacher should watch and advise.'¹

Professor Spiel, out of his life-long experience as a teacher in the Vienna State schools, has indicated the ways in which the delicate approach to self-government may be successfully made. The normal method by which a teacher imparts information is by directly lecturing and demonstrating his subject-matter and then catechizing the pupils upon it. An alternative method, adopted after the Austrian educational reforms, is to set the pupils a problem the answer to which they must puzzle out in free discussion among themselves. This may be characterized as the 'active' method of teaching, since it requires the pupils to arrive at results by their own efforts, in contrast to the 'passive' method, where the answers are given them by the teacher and only require to be memorized. The teacher has the role of guiding the discussion and encouraging the pupils to produce from their store of knowledge whatever material contributes to the problem's solution.

1. *Op. cit.*, p. 164.

The active method is clearly superior as a means of training the pupils to think for themselves. It relates book knowledge to practical values. It gives the class an aim of interest to it and provides in the form of free discussion a basis upon which self-government could rest. But it raises at once a number of disciplinary difficulties. 'To put it bluntly,' says Spiel, 'a class discussion will develop none of its potential value if two or more boys are talking at once, if those who are not speaking are inattentive, if more active and lively pupils give the others no chance of getting a word in edgeways, and if objective criticism is confused with vehemence and rudeness so that in the end the teacher has to shout at the top of his voice to make himself heard above the chaos.'¹ The 'passive' method of teaching avoids, of course, all these difficulties. Nevertheless, it is precisely in the process of overcoming the difficulties raised by the 'active' method that the Adlerian ideal of the class as an object lesson in co-operation can be realized and the children taught self-control, tolerance for each other's opinion, readiness to accept proper criticism and equality of contribution. If education is to be something more than mere instruction, the difficulties must be not only faced but welcomed.

A few of the many hints given by Spiel may serve to indicate the general way in which the teacher might set about his task. '1. The teacher may point out how many children already master the difficult habit of self-control. It is enough to mention a general figure. No names should be mentioned, because that would draw an invidious distinction. Merely to mention a number will allow some of the children to count themselves on the side of virtue. 2. At the end of the lesson the teacher may use the following trick: "I must make a note of the names of you who already know how to take part in a discussion." But he will mention no names. If the children want to know the names he will evade a direct answer by saying, "Each of you can answer

1. *Et seq.*, from Professor Spiel. Unpublished MS.

the question for himself by thinking over how he took part in the discussion.” 3. From time to time the teacher may ask the class as a whole: “Is there anyone in the class whom you think is making fewer mistakes in the discussion than before?” In this case, names are mentioned and a sort of progress record is set up.’

It is by means such as this that the class can be gradually drawn to look upon itself as a corporate body and to take a serious interest in its own self-government. When this point has been reached it may be advisable to set aside an hour a week for a discussion of the behaviour and progress of the class. The teacher will draw attention to certain difficulties which may have arisen. The children will put forward their suggestions which may lead to the adoption of a new rule and perhaps to the election of a monitor to enforce the rule. The codification of laws should not, however, be taken too far. ‘Many people are in favour of clearly formulated laws which should be written down so that the community can refer to them in case of need. But the difficulty here is – and whoever has had any practical experience of teaching will certainly agree with us – that the cases in which the conduct of children has to be referred to a desirable standard are so many and so varied that even a codification which went into the minutest details could never hope to cover everything. And further, in our experience many children set themselves out to find gaps in the class-laws. And when they have succeeded, they announce triumphantly, “There is nothing against it in the laws of our class!” There is truly no lack of rules and regulations in the world, but what is so often lacking is inner approval of the law. . . . We must not concentrate on extraneous regulations, but instead we must encourage the children to become aware of moral standards.’

Limits should also be observed to the power of the community to punish offenders. Certain offences such as stealing or late-coming are beyond the competence of children to deal with, for they lack the necessary psycho-

logical insight to understand the motive behind the mistake. Let us take as an example the case of a late-comer. 'Erich has a younger sister of whom he is exceedingly jealous. He has farther to go to school than she has and therefore he must leave the house earlier. In addition, the mother takes the sister to school. The jealous Erich thinks to himself, "Why does mother always take her to school? Why does she never take me to school?"' He begins to wait behind secretly to observe the two as they go off to school. "Perhaps mother buys her something I don't know about!" Day after day he does his shadowing, with the result that he is constantly late for school. . . . Is Erich to be placed before a class court? He is a child with a deadly fear in his heart, the fear that he is coming too short in the affections of his mother. If the community now punishes him for his late-coming and he feels misunderstood, his isolation will be intensified.'

This example brings us to another and very important consideration. 'Those who stumble,' said Adler, 'should not be trampled on but helped to their feet.' A community as much as an individual may show itself egotistical and lacking in social feeling. If it is desirable for the individual to co-operate with the aims of the community, it is equally desirable for the community to recognize itself as existing, not purely for its own sake, but as a means through which the individual can realize his best potentialities. 'How very different the situation would be,' says Spiel, 'if the class community adopted the attitude of the understanding helper rather than of the judge! Such a change would give a new objective to the whole system of self-government in schools, an objective which distinguishes the system of Individual Psychology from all others.' 'The author,' he continues, 'once had an illuminating object lesson when visiting a children's home in Germany. When he asked what happened when children proved unable to find their place in the community, he was told: "Every month there is a general meeting of children and teachers and a vote is taken on the con-

duct of each child. Whoever does not succeed in gaining at least four votes in his favour is expelled from the home." The idea of the community as something which is entitled to table uncompromising demands to which the individual has to conform under pain of expulsion is totally inadequate in the light of Individual Psychology. Education through the community is possible only if the community supplements its proper demands on the individual by an understanding of his errors and a revelation of their motives and by assisting the individual in an individual fashion.'

In Adler's wide and undeviatingly humane vision, the law of social feeling is the law for groups, for nations, for races as well as for individuals. The only whole is the whole of Humanity, of which all else are parts. The inability of a nation to see itself as a part of the whole, to recognize that it exists only by virtue of what it can contribute to the whole, is a failure of its social interest. A corollary of this egoism, this failure to see beyond itself, is the belief that its individuals exist only for its own purposes. Adler desired that from the very beginning children should be taught to take communal as well as personal responsibility. They should learn to work not only with the community but as a community. The teacher must train them to feel accountable for their backward members as, in later life, they should feel accountable for the backward or criminal members in their nation. To this end the teacher should initiate discussion upon what means might be adopted to bring the less advanced up to the general standard. In Spiel's school it was decided to appoint 'helpers' from among the brighter members who would sit beside the backward pupils and give them explanations. Adler was always against the brighter members being moved to a higher class. Where, under a competitive system, the example of the brighter members of the class may discourage those of the class who cannot reach the same standard, under the co-operative system the brighter members can be a stimulus. In helping the backward, they also learn to make a social

use of their faculties, a lesson more important to their future adjustment to society than would be the absorption of a greater quantity of facts.

'The helper system,' says Spiel, 'was a very welcome supplement to our efforts to encourage the more backward children to improve. Later on the boys organized their own supplementary lessons. . . . On such afternoons the classroom was a lively place. At one desk a pair would be sitting, one dictating zealously from a book provided by the teacher, and the other writing it all down, at first rather unwillingly and perhaps even a little resentfully, but gradually with increasing interest until finally he was working enthusiastically. In one corner a helper would sit firing the multiplication table at his protégé. . . . In another corner a helper would get his protégé to read aloud and then carefully correct every wrong emphasis and mistake. . . . The helper system developed and extended by its own inner logic. Where a boy was unable to attend school for a while another boy would go to his home. . . . The boys even began to help each other socially; they shared their sandwiches, invited another boy home, prepared little presents for him, etc. Thus the class as a community of assistance represents the crown of the whole system. The most important achievement of the whole system of school self-government seems to us to lie in the fact that it encourages children to realize the difficulties of others and to come forward and help instead of standing coldly and uninterestedly to one side.'

Another function of the teacher is the encouragement of those individual children who remain persistent problems, either on account of backwardness or of misbehaviour. For reasons already given, encouragement must never take the form of excessive praise of the child's personality or of conduct on the teacher's part which might be interpreted by other members of the class as favouritism. The child must not be induced to learn out of affection for the teacher but for the sake of the accomplishment alone.

As far as possible mistakes should be silently ignored. 'It is not always a good thing to force improvements at once. When will people learn finally that to pounce on a child's obvious failings at once is not the best way of exerting educational influence. If this is done, then the child is put into a hostile attitude immediately.' While the teacher should never once fail to remark openly on any real progress that the child has made, 'expressions of appreciation will be used deliberately and sparingly. It makes a big difference if the teacher accepts a good performance silently, with a mere nod of the head, with a short "right", or with a few words such as "That idea is useful, it can carry us further".'

It is not an easy matter for a child who has won a reputation for naughtiness to give up his line of conduct without losing face. For naughty or backward children, the teacher has sometimes to 'build a bridge' for them to cross back to the useful side of life. He may have to stage-manage a small success for them. As an example of the method, let us take the case of Hans, who is backward in composition. The teacher cannot with any justice praise the composition which Hans has submitted, but he is able to underline one particularly good sentence. 'The next day the teacher causes the best compositions to be read out. Several of the children are also allowed to read out sentences which they have written particularly well. Hans is among them. The whole thing is arranged by the teacher in his role of stage-manager purely in order to give Hans the feeling that "he can do it".'

There remain those children whose special problems are of too grave a nature to be solved merely by the co-operative atmosphere of the class or by the special encouragement offered by the teacher. These are the cases which are outside the competence of the teacher unless he be also a trained psychologist, and it is for these that the provision of child guidance clinics becomes essential. But it is to be hoped that a time will come when the teacher is himself so well versed

in psychological method as to make such clinics almost unnecessary. As a recapitulation of the whole psychological method of approach, I will give a picture of the ideal teacher-psychologist in action:

'After four years in the lower school, Fritz came into the upper school. It was not long before he made his presence felt. First of all in relation to discipline. He usually finds something to fiddle with in class, and he very seldom pays any attention to what the teacher is saying. It may be the strap of his satchel which interests him, and this he rolls carefully round and round his finger and then lets it spiral off again. Or he will fiddle with a cheap fountain pen which he possesses and of which he is inordinately fond. He will screw and unscrew the top again and again. He will fill and empty it repeatedly. Perhaps in doing so he makes an ink blot or two, then the clearing up of the blots involves long and wearisome manipulations.

'As soon as the bell rings for the break Fritz comes to life again. He climbs on to the desk, shouts at the top of his voice and makes faces. He is tireless at inventing new tricks. In particular he loves playing the clown. For him a ruler is just something to balance on the end of his nose. The tip-seats in the lavatory provide him with an endless source of fun. Needless to say, he is always surrounded by a group of noisy boys who reward his fooling with roars of laughter. But when the bell goes and lessons begin again, he sinks into himself like a heap of ashes when the fire has gone out.

'His school work, as might be expected, is very unsatisfactory. One thing is very noticeable; causal relationships are a mystery to him. The boy's inability to think logically showed itself above all in mathematics. His ignorance of the multiplication table was almost disarming. The quality of his work in general made his removal to a higher class at the end of the year highly problematical. Fritz was a cut-and-dried candidate for ploughing.

'Our first talk with him took place outside the class.

'TEACHER (lighting a cigarette in order to dissipate the school atmosphere and speaking in a friendly tone): "Well, how do you like it in school?"

'FRITZ: "It's not so bad."

'T.: "Good. Where would you sooner be, by the way, at school or at home?"

'F. (without hesitation): "At school."

'The decided fashion in which this preference is expressed arouses our interest. We begin to wonder what is wrong at home and we decide to follow up our first clue.

'T.: "Oh, why's that?"

'F.: "It's dull at home."

'T.: "Are you alone at home?"

'F.: "No."

'This curt answer and the aversion in the tone strengthen our suspicion that between Fritz and someone whom for the moment we must refer to as X there is considerable tension.

'T.: "Have you any brothers and sisters?"

'F.: "Yes, five."

'T.: "How old are they?"

'F.: "The oldest is twenty-eight already. He's in Innsbruck."

'Here the tone has changed. It is less strained.

'T.: "Oh! So he's earning his own living? And perhaps he sends home nice things for you occasionally!"

'The expression has grown less suspicious. Fritz is even grinning a little.

'T.: "Any other brothers?"

'F.: "One. He's eighteen."

'T.: "And the others?"

'F.: "Then I've got three sisters."

'T.: "And what about them?"

'F.: "One of them is a tailoress and the other works in a jeweller's."

'The teacher waits expectantly, but Fritz says nothing more. Why does he so demonstratively say nothing of the third sister? Fritz is the youngest in the family, and so the

omitted sister is the one who comes immediately before him in the chronological order.

'T.: "And what about the youngest?"

'The word youngest is quite enough and already the face of Fritz is set hard. Its friendliness has disappeared. The head lowers and the answer comes without expression.

'"She goes to a secondary school. She's thirteen."

'And the teacher observes that the right hand is clenched into a fist. A further suspicion arises. We know that the father is a jobbing tailor. Four children are still at home. The clothing suggests poverty. And yet in such a family one of the children is studying. The girl must be a good scholar. That might explain the poor performance of Fritz.

'T.: "What sort of a student is your sister?"

'F.: "A very good one."

'T.: "How do you know that?"

'F.: "Mother's always saying so, and her teachers tell mother so when she goes to see them."

'We begin to imagine how the mother talks to Fritz. Or is it the father, perhaps?

'T.: "Is your father strict with you?"

'The question produces a broad grin.

'F.: "Oh no! He often gives me money."

'T.: "And I suppose your mother very often does not know anything about it, eh?"

'Fritz nods gleefully. But we are not so happy about it. If a father secretly gives a child money, then it is not going too far to suspect that the father himself feels that he owes the boy something, that there is something to make good to him.

'T.: "And what about the mother?"

'The effect of this question is striking. The head drops, the mouth curls, the eyes grow bright with tears, and the answer comes haltingly:

'"She often hits me."

'So there we are! It is not now difficult to imagine what sort of life Fritz leads at home. "Leisl! Now, she's different.

There's a child who's no trouble. She learns her lessons and all the teachers praise her. But as for you, you lazy good-for-nothing, you'll never be any good. Why don't you take your sister for an example?" And so on.

T.: "How does your sister do in mathematics?"

F.: "She gets a 'very good'."

T.: "And what did you get in the lower classes?"

F.: "Sufficient."

T.: "Well, in that case I'm not surprised that you always think your sister cleverer than you. And when you get the strap its small wonder that you begin to think that no one cares for you much."

Fritz begins to cry.

T.: "Don't cry. Even if it has really been like that, that doesn't mean to say that it's got to stay like that. I'll tell you what, I want to help you to make it different. We can't do anything about the fact that your sister can do more than you can - after all, she's older than you are. There's no virtue in being older. But I think you were a bit afraid of learning because you thought that you wouldn't be able to do anything worth while. You thought to yourself, 'I'll never be able to do what my sister can do, so what's the use of trying?' I can imagine just what you felt. But I'm sure you were wrong. What your sister can do, you can do too."

"That was quite enough for one day. We have taken Fritz by surprise and let him see clearly how much we have already discovered about him. The next step was to talk to the mother. At the invitation of the teacher she appeared at the school. She turned out to be a typical Viennese housewife. She put down her shopping bag carefully and sat down with a certain amount of circumspection. The first thing to do was to find the right contact with her. A few friendly words and a little familiar Viennese dialect helped, and then she started off:

"Well, teacher, what's he been up to now? He's a little devil. You have no idea what a burden that child is to me.

He won't learn. I might have given up in despair if my youngest daughter weren't such a treasure. . . ."

"There was really little more the mother could tell us. Our next step was to change her attitude. But of course it was too early to reveal to her how she came to adopt such an attitude towards the two children. All we could do for the moment was to bring her to recognize the mistakes she had made. That would not be too difficult. She was the type of woman who is not easily angered. What should we answer? Our reaction must certainly be different from what she expected.

'TEACHER: "Tell me, Mrs. N., I'm sure you're a good cook?"

'MOTHER (very much surprised): "Well, yes, I suppose I'm not bad."

'T.: "Well, then, try to imagine the following. You stand over the fire every day doing your best to make everything as nice as possible, and then your husband comes in to his meal and he's always got something to complain of. One day he thinks you've oversalted the food. Another day it's overcooked. The next day it's undercooked. And he's always saying, 'Look at your sister! Why can't you cook like she does?' And when there's onion sauce he says to you, 'Do you call that onion sauce? Why don't you ask your sister how she makes it? It's a pity you can't take an example from her!' And supposing he went on like this day after day. If you ask me it wouldn't be long before. . . ."

'M. (laughing despite herself): "Yes, you're right. It wouldn't be long before I threw it at him."

'T. (suddenly very serious and in a more decided tone): "Well, what about Fritz, then? Don't you think he feels much the same as you would?"

'For a moment or two there is silence.

'T. (in a softer voice): "And does he get cuffs very often?"

'M. (suddenly very uncertain of herself): "Well, only when he deserves it."

'T.: "Look, I'll make a suggestion. The cuffing doesn't do any good at all. Let's try something different. Frankly, I think the trouble is that the boy has lost all courage. He doesn't think he could do anything if he tried. But I had a chat with him to-day and I think he's going to try now. Of course, you mustn't expect that he is going to be perfect right away, and unless you help me, I shan't be able to do anything on my own. Give me your word you won't hit the boy again. At least not for the next fortnight. Not a cuff, not a push – whatever happens. Will you do it?"

'M.: "It won't work, you'll see."

'T.: "Leave that to me. I'll make it my business to talk to him about it."'

Adler, who at this time was largely in the United States, was able to visit this school only once. It happened to be an hour of free discussion by a class of fourteen-year-old boys who were about to leave and to go out into the world, and the subject of the discussion was 'The Meaning of Life'. Adler sat silently in a corner of the classroom, listening intently to all that was said. 'I had never heard the boys speak with more manliness and good sense,' said Spiel. 'I could not have wished for a better discussion or one more wholly based on common sense. Each boy took his turn and each had something to say that was worth saying.'

When the class was over Adler got up and shook Spiel silently by the hand. He was evidently too moved for speech. 'Nor did he ever speak of it to me afterwards,' said Spiel. 'Nor I to him. But I had the feeling that it was one of the happiest hours of his life, and I know it was the happiest of mine.'¹

1. Bottome, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

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Problems of Neurosis

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ALFRED ADLER:

AN INTRODUCTION TO HIS PSYCHOLOGY

By Lewis Way



Lotte Meitner-Graf

Lewis Way, who was born in 1911, was educated at Sherborne School and Cambridge. After graduating he studied languages at Dijon and Bonn, and psychology under Professor Adler in Vienna. In 1948 he published *Man's Quest for Significance*, a socio-psychological study of the modern world, and in 1950 *Adler's Place in Psychology*, which deals particularly with the philosophy which forms the background of Adler's work and its relationship with other schools of thought.

Mr Way has travelled widely in Europe, India, Australia, and North America, and speaks four languages. He is married and now lives in Rome. His wife works for the United Nations.